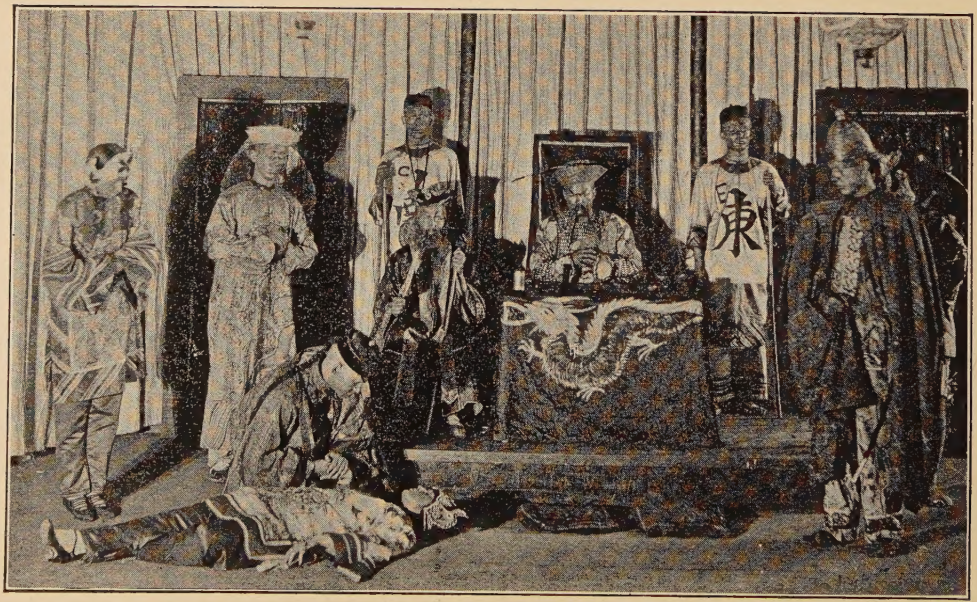
ONE-ACT PLAYS

GOLDSTONE

306 RILEY HIGH SCHOOL-FEES
ENGLISH DEPT.



THE THRICE PROMISED BRIDE

Presented by the Carolina Playmakers

The Academy Classics

ONE-ACT PLAYS

COMPILED AND EDITED
BY
GEORGE A. GOLDSTONE
MANUAL TRAINING HIGH SCHOOL
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

RILEY HIGH SCHOOL FEES
ENGLISH DEPT.

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Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

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PREFATORY NOTE

RECENT years have advanced dramatics in the high school from a position as a school activity to a place in the curriculum. This has brought about an increased demand for suitable dramatic material as well as for new avenues of approach.

This volume contains fifteen modern one-act plays of various types, each one a play of distinction and each one strong in its appeal to pupils of high school age. While the plays are sufficiently vital and significant to repay classroom study, they are all "acting" plays — not, however, beyond the resources of the ordinary school auditorium stage.

Suggestions, contained in the section entitled *Dramatics in the High School*, show how classroom study and play production may be closely related. The sections entitled *The Little Theatre Movement*, *The New Stagecraft*, *The Structure of the One-Act Play* present a brief survey of a phase of the new dramatic movement, and furnish the pupil a basis for enjoyment and appreciation of the drama.

A carefully selected and comprehensive bibliography arranged under convenient headings should be useful to both teacher and pupil.

G. A. G.

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THE DIABOLICAL CIRCLE

BY

BEULAH BOMSTEAD

First Arneberg Prize Play, 1921

Reprinted from *Dakota Playmakers Plays* by special arrangement with the publishers, Walter H. Baker Company.

No royalty is charged for the production of this play by amateurs. The Playmakers ask, however, that full public recognition be made of the writer of the play, the Dakota Playmakers, and the University of North Dakota.

Permission for professional performance must be secured from the Playmakers, who may be addressed in care of Walter H. Baker Company, 41 Winter Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

CHARACTERS

COTTON MATHER	
BETTY	His daughter
ADONIJAH WIGGLESWORTH	A suitor of Betty's
CHARLES MANNING	Another one

SCENE: Boston; the living-room in the Mather home.
TIME: About 1700; one afternoon in early autumn.

THE DIABOLICAL CIRCLE

SCENE: — *The stage represents the living-room of the Mather home. A large colonial fireplace is seen down stage left, within which stand huge brass andirons. To one side hangs the bellows, with the tongs near by; while above, underneath the mantelpiece, is suspended an old flintlock rifle. At the ends of the mantel are brass candlesticks, and hanging directly above is an old-fashioned portrait of Betty's mother. There are two doors, one leading into the hall at center right, the other, communicating with the rest of the house, up stage left. A straight high-backed settee is down stage right, while in the center back towers an old grandfather's clock. To the right of the clock is the window, cross-barred and draped with flowered chintz. An old-fashioned table occupies the corner between the window and the hall door. Here and there are various straight-backed chairs of Dutch origin. Rag rugs cover the floor.*

(*As the curtain rises* COTTON MATHER *is seated in a large armchair by the fire with* BETTY *on a stool at his feet with her knitting. Cotton, his hair already touched with the whitening frost of many a severe New England winter, is grave and sedate. Very much exercised with the perils of this life, and contemplative of the life to come, he takes himself and the world about him very seriously. Not so with Mistress*

Betty. Outwardly demure, yet inwardly rebellious against the straightened conventions of the times, she dimples over with roguish merriment upon the slightest provocation. As we first see them Cotton is giving Betty some timely advice.)

Cotton. But you must understand that marriage, my daughter, is a most reverend and serious matter which should be approached in a manner fittingly considerate of its grave responsibility.

Betty (*thoughtfully*). Truly reverend, and most serious father, — (*looking up roguishly*) but I like not so much of the grave about it.

Cotton (*continuing*). I fear thou look'st upon the matter too lightly. It is not seemly to treat such a momentous occasion thus flippantly.

Betty (*protesting*). Nay, father, why consider it at all? Marriage is yet a great way off. Mayhap I shall never leave thee.

Cotton. Thou little thinkest that I may be suddenly called on to leave *thee.* The Good Word cautions us to boast not ourselves of the morrow for we know not what a day may bring forth.

Betty (*dropping her knitting*). Father, thou art not feeling well. Perhaps ——

Cotton. Nay, child, be not alarmed. 'Tis but a most necessary lesson to be learned and laid up in the heart. I will not always be with thee and I would like to be comfortably assured of thy future welfare before I go.

Betty (*picking up her knitting*). Be comfortably assured then, I prithee. I have no fears.

Cotton (*bringing his arm down forcibly on the arm of the*

chair). Aye! There it is. Thou hast no fears. Would that thou hadst some. (*More tenderly*) Had thy prudent and virtuous mother only lived to point the way, I might be spared this anxiety; but, beset by diverse difficulties in establishing the kingdom of God in this country, and sorely harassed by many hardships and by evil men, I fear me I have not propounded to thee much that I ought.

Betty. In what then is mine education lacking? Have I not all that is fitting and proper for a maiden to know?

Cotton (*perplexed*). I know not. I have done my best, but thou hast not the proper attitude of mind befitting a maiden about to enter the married estate.

Betty (*protesting*). Nay, but I am not about to enter the married estate.

Cotton. It is time.

Betty (*mockingly pleading*). Entreat me not to leave thee, father, nor forsake thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and whither ——

Cotton (*interrupting sternly*). Betty! It ill befitteth a daughter of mine to quote the Scripture with such seeming irreverence. — I would not be parted from thee, yet I would that thou wert promised to some godly and upright soul that would guide thee yet more surely in the paths of righteousness. There be many such.

Betty. Yea, too many.

Cotton. What meanest thou?

Betty. One were one too many when I would have none.

Cotton (*shaking his head*). Ah, Betty, Betty! When wilt thou be serious? There is a goodly youth among

the friends surrounding thee whom I have often marked, both on account of his godly demeanor and simple wisdom.

Betty. Yea, simple.

Cotton. I speak of Adonijah Wigglesworth, a most estimable young gentleman, an acquaintance whom thou wouldst do well to cultivate.

Betty. Yea, cultivate.

Cotton. What thinkest thou?

Betty. A sod too dense for any ploughshare. My wit would break in the turning.

Cotton. His is a strong nature, born to drive and not be driven. There is not such another, nay not in the whole of Boston.

Betty. Nay, I have lately heard there be many such!

Cotton (*testily*). Mayhap thou couldst name a few.

Betty (*musingly, holds up her left hand with fingers spread*). Aye, that I can. (*Checks off one on the little finger.*) There be Marcus Ainslee ——

Cotton. A goodly youth that hath an eye for books.

Betty. One eye, sayest thou? Nay, four; and since I am neither morocco bound nor edged with gilt, let us consign him to the shelf wherein he findeth fullest compensation.

Cotton. How now? A man of action, then, should appeal to thy brash tastes. What sayest thou to Jeremiah Wadsworth?

Betty. Too brash and rash for me, (*checking off that candidate on the next finger*) and I'll have none of him. There's Percy Wayne.

Cotton. Of the bluest blood in Boston ——

Betty. Yet that be not everything, — (*Checks off another finger.*) and Jonas Appleby ——

Cotton. He hath an eye to worldly goods ——

Betty (*quickly*). Especially the larder. To marry him would be an everlasting round between the tankard and the kettle. (*Checks him off.*) Nay, let me look yet farther, — James Endicott. (*Checking*)

Cotton. Aye, there might be a lad for thee: birth, breeding, a well-favored countenance, and most agreeable.

Betty. Yea, most agreeable, — unto himself. 'Twere a pity to disturb such unanimity. Therefore let us pass on. Take Charles Manning, an you please ——

Cotton. It pleaseth me not! I know his like! His father before him a devoted servant of the devil and King Charles. With others of his kind he hath brought dissension among the young men of Harvard, many of whom are dedicated to the service of the Lord, with his wicked apparel and ungodly fashion of wearing long hair after the manner of Russians and barbarous Indians. Many there be with him brought up in such pride as doth in no way become the service of the Lord. — The devil himself hath laid hold on our young men so that they do evaporate senseless, useless, noisy impertinency wherever they may be; and now (*rising and pacing*) it has e'en got out in the pulpits of the land, to the great grief and fear of many godly hearts.

Betty (*standing upright*). But Charles ——

Cotton (*interrupting*). Mention not that scapegrace in my hearing.

Betty (*still persisting*). But father, truly thou knowest not ——

Cotton (*almost savagely, while Betty retreats to a safe distance*). Name him not, daughter! I will not have it. Compared with Adonijah he is a reed shaken in the winds, whereas Adonijah resembleth a tree planted by the river of waters.

Betty (*who has been looking out of the window*). Converse of the devil and thou wilt behold his horns. Even now he approacheth the knocker.

(*The knocker sounds.*)

Cotton (*sternly*). Betake thyself to thine own chamber with thine unseemly tongue, which so ill befitteth a maid.

(*Betty is very demure just then, with head slightly bent and downcast eyes; but the moment Cotton turns she glances roguishly after his retreating form; then while her glance revolves about the room, she starts slightly as her gaze falls upon the clock. A smile of mischievous delight flits over her countenance as she tiptoes in Cotton's wake until the clock is reached; Cotton, unsuspecting, meanwhile proceeds to do his duty as host with never a backward glance. While he is out in the hall Betty with a lingering smile of triumph steps into the clock and cautiously peeks forth as her father opens the door and ushers in* ADONIJAH, *whereupon the door softly closes.*)

Adonijah (*outside*). Good morrow, reverend sire.

Cotton (*graciously, as they enter*). Enter, and doubly welcome, good Adonijah.

Adonijah. I would inquire whether thy daughter Betty is within.

Cotton. We were but speaking of thee as thy knock sounded. Remove thy wraps and make thyself in com-

fort. (*Motions toward chair.*) Betty will be here presently; she hath but retired for the moment.

(*Adonijah is a lean, lank, lantern-jawed individual, clad in the conventional sober gray of the Puritan, with high crowned hat, and a fur tippet wound about his neck up to his ears. He removes the hat and tippet and hands them to Cotton, who carefully places them upon the table; meanwhile Adonijah looks appraisingly about him, and judiciously selects the armchair by the fire. He pauses a moment to rub his hands before the blaze, and then gingerly relaxes into the depths of the armchair as though fearful his comfort would give way ere fully attained. Cotton places a chair on the other side of Adonijah and is seated. All very deliberately.*)

Cotton (*as he sits*). And how is it with thee since I have seen thee last?

Adonijah. My business prospereth, (*more mournfully*) but not so finely as it might well do. (*The clock chimes four o'clock as the men talk. They, of course, must not pause for this.*)

Cotton. Thou hast suffered some great loss?

Adonijah. But yes, — and no, — this matter of lending money hath many and grievous complications, not the least of which is the duplicity of the borrower. I but insist on the thirty pounds to the hundred as my due recompense, and when I demand it they respond not, but let my kindness lie under the clods of ingratitude. (*Straightening up, and speaking with conviction*) They shall come before the council. I will have what is mine own.

Cotton (*righteously*). And it is not unbecoming of thee to demand it. I wist not what the present generation is coming to.

Adonijah. They have no sense of the value of money. They know not how to demean themselves properly in due proportion to their worldly goods as the Lord hath prospered them. There be many that have nothing and do hold their head above us that be worthy of our possessions.

Cotton. It will not always be thus. Judgment shall come upon them. The wicked stand in slippery places.

Adonijah. Aye, let them fall. I for one have upheld them too far. They squander their means in riotous living, and walk not in the ways of their fathers.

Cotton. There may be many such. But thou, my lad, thou art not one of the multitude. As I have often observed to my Betty, thou standest out as a most upright and God-fearing young man.

Adonijah (*brimming over with self-satisfaction*). That have I ever sought to be.

Cotton. An example that others would do well to imitate.

Adonijah (*all puffed up*). Nay, others value it not. They be envious of my good fortune.

Cotton. A most prudent young man! Nay, be not so overblushingly timid. Thou'rt too modest.

Adonijah (*his face falling*). But Betty, — doth she regard me thus?

Cotton. The ways of a girl are past finding out; but despair not. I think she hath thee much to heart, but as the perverse heart of woman dictateth, behaveth much to the contrary.

Adonijah (*brightening up as one with new hopes*). Thou thinkest ——

Cotton (*interrupting*). Nay, lad, I am sure of it. Betty was ever a dutiful daughter.

(*Betty peeks out mischievously.*)

Adonijah. But I mistrust me her heart is elsewhere.

Cotton. Thou referr'st to young Manning without doubt. It can never be. 'Tis but a passing fancy.

Adonijah. Nay, but I fear Charles thinketh not so. I have been told in secret (*leaning forward confidentially*) by one that hath every opportunity to know, that he hath enjoined Goodman Shrewsbury to send for — (*impressively*) a ring!

Cotton (*surprised, shocked*). A ring, sayest thou?

Adonijah (*nodding*). Aye, even so.

Cotton. But he hath not signified such intention here to me.

Adonijah. Then there are no grounds for his rash presumption?

Cotton. Humph! Grounds! For a ring! Aye, there'll be no diabolical circle here for the devil to dance in. I will question Betty thereon. (*Rises.*) Do thou remain here and I will send her to thee. Bah! That he should offer a daughter of mine a ring!

(*Cotton leaves the room. Adonijah leans back in his chair in supreme contentment at the turn affairs have taken. The clamorous knocker arouses him from his reverie. He gazes stupidly around. The continued imperious tattoo on the knocker finally brings him to his feet. He goes into the hall and opens the door. His voice is heard.*)

Adonijah (*frostily*). Good-afternoon, Sir Charles; mine host is absent.

Charles (*stepping in*). My mission hath rather to do with Mistress Betty. Is she in?

Adonijah (*closing the hall door, and turning to Charles, replies in grandiose hauteur*). Mistress Betty is otherwise engaged, I would have thee know.

Charles. Engaged? (*Bowing*) Your humble servant, I trust, hath the supreme pleasure of that engagement. (*He glances inquiringly about the room, and places his hat on the table beside that of Adonijah. The two hats are as different as the two men: Adonijah's prim, Puritan, severe; Charles' three-cornered with a flowing plume.*)

(*Charles is a handsome chap of goodly proportions, with a straightforward air and a pleasant smile. He is dressed more after the fashion of the Cavaliers of Virginia and wears a long wig with flowing curls. The two men size each other up.*)

Adonijah (*meaningly*). Her father will shortly arrive.

Charles (*impatiently striding forth*). Devil take her father, 'tis Mistress Betty I would see. Where is she?

(*Charles continues pacing the floor. Adonijah, shocked beyond measure, turns his back on the offending Charles and with folded arms and bowed head stands aside in profound meditation. The clock door slowly opens and Betty cautiously peeks out. Charles stops short and is about to begin a decided demonstration when Betty, with a warning glance toward Adonijah, checks him with upraised hand. The clock door closes and Charles subsides into the armchair with*

The clock door slowly opened and Betty peeked out

a comprehending grin of delight. Adonijah slowly turns and faces Charles with a melancholy air.)

Charles. Prithee, why so sad? (*The grin becomes a chuckle.*)

Adonijah. I do discern no cause for such unrighteous merriment.

Charles. 'Tis none the less for all of that. I take life as I find it, and for that matter, so do they all, even thou. The difference be in the finding.

(*Whistles "Funiculi Funicula."*)

Adonijah (*uneasily*). It is time her father did arrive.

Charles. Where then hath he been?

Adonijah. He but went in search of Betty.

Charles. Ah, then we'll wait.

(*He whistles, while Adonijah moves uneasily about the room, glancing every now and then at this disturbing element of his peace as if he would send him to kingdom come, an he only could.*)

Adonijah (*after considerable toleration*). Waiting may avail thee naught.

Charles. And thee? Nevertheless we'll wait. (*Whistles.*)

Adonijah (*takes another turn or two and fetches up a counterfeit sigh*). Methinks, her father's quest be fruitless.

Charles (*starting up*). Ah, then, let us go. (*Adonijah, visibly relieved, sits down in the chair opposite.*)

Charles (*amused*). Nay? (*Sits down and relaxes.*) Ah then, we'll wait. (*Whistles.*)

Adonijah (*troubled*). 'Tis certain Mistress Betty be not here.

Charles. Nay, if she be not here, then I am neither here nor there. I would wager ten pounds to a farthing she be revealed in time if she but will it. Wilt take me up?

Adonijah. It be not seeming so to stake thy fortune on a woman's whim.

Charles (*laughs*). Thou'rt right on it. If she will, say I, for if she will she won't, and if she won't she will.

Adonijah. False jargon! A woman has no will but e'en her father's as a maid, her husband's later still.

(*Enter Cotton who stops short on seeing Charles, but rallies quickly, and proceeds.*)

Cotton (*curtly to Charles*). Good-day to you, sir.

Charles (*who has risen, bows*). And to you, sir.

Cotton (*to Adonijah*). I am deeply grieved to report that Mistress Betty is not to be found.

(*Adonijah steals a sly look of triumph at Charles.*)

Charles (*in mock solemnity*). I prithee present my deep regrets to Miss Betty. I will call again. (*Starts out.*)

Cotton. God speed thee! (*As Charles takes his leave Cotton places his hand affectionately upon Adonijah's shoulder, saying reassuringly, as they move toward the door*) Come again, my son; Betty may not be afar off. I fain would have her soon persuaded of thy worth. Improve thy time.

Adonijah (*beaming*). Good morrow, sir; I will. [*Exit.*

(*As the door closes behind them Cotton slowly walks toward*

the fire where he stands in complete reverie. Still absorbed in thought he walks slowly out the door at the left. Betty peeks cautiously out, but hearing footsteps quickly withdraws. Cotton reënters with hat on. He is talking to himself reflectively.)

Cotton. Where can she be? Mayhap at neighbor Ainslee's.

(*He goes out through the hall door. The banging of the outside door is heard. The clock door once more slowly opens and Betty peers forth listening. The sound of a door opening causes her to draw back. As the noise is further emphasized by approaching footsteps she pulls the clock door quickly to. Charles enters. He looks inquiringly about, tosses his hat on the table, and goes for the clock. He opens it with a gay laugh. Betty steps forth out of the clock, very much assisted by Charles.*)

Charles. Blessed relief! Thou art in very truth then flesh and blood?

Betty. And what else should I be, forsooth?

Charles (*laughing*). I marked thee for a mummy there entombed.

Betty (*disengaging her hand*). What? Darest thou?

Charles. A lively mummy, now thou art come to, whilst I — (*Sighs.*) I waited through the ages!

Betty (*laughingly*). A veritable monument of patient grief.

Charles. And Adonijah ——

Betty. Yea, verily, old Father Time but come to life. (*Mimics.*) Thy waiting may avail thee naught.

Charles. In truth it *may* avail me naught; thy father may be back at any time, while I have much to say. (*Steps to her and takes her hands.*) Sweet Betty ——

Betty (*interrupting*). Nay, sweet Betty call me not.

Charles. Dear Betty, then, the dearest ——

Betty (*quickly*). Yea, call me dearest mummy, Hottentot, or what you will, just so it be not *sweet*, like Adonijah. It sickens me beyond expressing.

Charles. Then, sweet Betty thou art not. Say rather sour Betty, cross Betty, mean Betty, bad Betty, mad Betty, sad Betty ——

Betty (*suddenly dimpling*). Nay, glad Betty!

Charles. Art then so glad? Wilt tell me why? In sooth I know not whether to be glad, or sad, or mad. Sometimes I am but one, sometimes I am all three.

Betty. Wilt tell me why?

Charles (*stepping closer and imprisoning her left hand*). Thou wilt not now escape it, for I will tell thee why and mayhap this will aid me. (*Slips ring, which he has had concealed in his pocket, on her finger.*) Hath this no meaning for thee?

Betty (*her eyes sparkling with mischief*). Aye, 'tis a diabolical circle for the devil to dance in!

Charles (*in astonishment*). A what?

Betty (*slowly emphasizing with her finger pointed at Charles*). A diabolical circle for the devil to dance in, — so father saith. Likewise Adonijah.

Charles (*weakly endeavoring to comprehend*). A diabolical circle — but what! — say it again, Betty.

Betty (*repeats slowly*). A diabolical circle for the devil to dance in.

Charles (*throws back his head and laughs*). May I be the devil!

Betty (*shaking her finger at him*). Then dance! (*They laughingly take position as though for a minuet. The knocker sounds. Betty runs to the window.*) Aye, there's old Adonijah at the knocker. Into the clock, — hie thee, — quick, quick!

Charles (*reproachfully*). And wouldst thou incarcerate me through the ages? (*Turns to the clock.*) O timely sarcophagus!

(*Charles is smuggled into the clock, and Betty has barely enough time to make a dash for the hat and conceal it behind her before the door opens and in stalks Adonijah. He looks about suspiciously. Betty faces him with the hat held behind her. He removes his hat and tippet and lays them on the table.*)

Adonijah. Methought I heard a sound of many feet.

Betty (*looking down*). Two feet have I; no more, no less.

Adonijah (*dryly*). Aye, two be quite sufficient.

Betty. An thou sayest the word, they yet can beat as loud a retreat as an whole regiment.

Adonijah. Thou dost my meaning misconstrue.

Betty. Construe it then, I prithee.

Adonijah. I came not here to vex ——

Betty. Then get thee hence. (*He steps forward. Betty steps back.*) But not *behind* me, Satan.

Adonijah (*coming closer, his face twisted into what is as near a smile as it ever achieves*). And yet thou driv'st me to it.

Betty (*backing off*). Indeed, thou hast a nature born to *drive* and not be driven.

Adonijah (*highly complimented*). So be it; yet I scarce had hoped that thou wouldst notice. (*Advancing*) Born to drive thou sayest, not be driven.

Betty (*retreating*). Thou hast said it, born to *drive*. But what to drive I have not said. That knowledge hath my father yet concealed.

Adonijah (*eagerly*). Thy father, then, hath told thee ——

Betty (*who is retreating steadily across stage*). Thou wert born to drive! (*Strikes settee and goes down on the hat with the word "drive." Adonijah seats himself beside Betty. Betty is of necessity forced to remain, — on the hat. Adonijah slides his arm along the back of the settee. The clock strikes erratically. He jerks his arm back and gazes in the direction of the clock. The clock hands wigwag. Adonijah stares abstractedly and passes his hand over his forehead in a dazed manner. Betty solicitously*) What aileth thee?

Adonijah (*still staring*). The time!

Betty (*stifles a yawn*). It doth grow late.

Adonijah. But not consistently; it changeth.

Betty. 'Twas ever so with time.

Adonijah (*reminiscently*). Of a certainty they moved.

Betty. Yea, verily, 'tis not uncommon.

Adonijah. But backwards!

Betty (*joyfully*). Why then, my prayers are answered! How often I have prayed them thus to move! Yet hath it never come to pass.

Adonijah. Nay, hadst thou seen ——

Betty. Prithee calm thyself. Thou'rt ill.

Adonijah (*steals his arm along the back of the settee and moves over closer*). Sweet Betty! (*Betty looks away with a wry face.*) Thy indifference in no wise blinds me to thy conception of my true value. (*Betty sits up, round-eyed.*) There was a time when I despaired —— (*The clock again strikes wildly. The hands drop and rise as before. Adonijah excitedly points at the clock.*) Again! Did'st mark it? Something doth ail the clock.

Betty. Yea, truly thou art ill; the clock behaveth much more to the point than thou.

Adonijah (*tearing his gaze from the clock*). As I was on the point of saying — (*Glances at the clock.*) — thy father hath given — (*another glance*) — me to understand — (*With eye on the clock he hitches up closer.*) — that thou art not averse to mine affections —— (*As he attempts to put his arm around Betty the clock strikes a veritable tattoo. He jumps excitedly to his feet as the hands travel all the way round. Pointing*) Now look! Mark the time!

Cotton (*entering; innocently*). Tarry yet awhile, my son, the time doth not prevent thee.

Adonijah. Tarry? Time doth not prevent? Little knowest thou! (*Gazes abstractedly about. Sights the ring on Betty's finger. She, in excitement, has forgotten to keep her hands behind her back.*) Aye, there it is, the diabolical circle. It is a charm. It harms her not, while all about me is askew. Whence came she here? (*Points at Betty.*) She neither came nor went, and yet she was not there and now she is. A manly form did enter. Yet hath vanished into thin air. Yea, verily, it was none

other than the devil himself in one of his divers forms, of which he hath aplenty. The very clock indulgeth in unseemly pranks. A strange influence hangs over me. I cannot now abide. I must depart hence. My conscience bids me go.

Cotton (*striving to detain him*). Hold! Thou'rt mad!

Betty. Nay, father, he is ill.

Adonijah. Aye, if I be mad, thy daughter be to blame. The spell did come upon me. I have seen strange things.

Cotton. What meanest thou?

Adonijah (*pointing at Betty, who regards him wonderingly. Speaks slowly*). Thy daughter is a witch!

Betty (*runs to Cotton*). Oh, father!

Cotton (*consoles Betty. Thunders at Adonijah*). What? Darest thou to bring forth such an accusation?

Adonijah. Aye, while I yet have strength to order mine own will. We shall see what we shall see when the fires leap around the stake. All the diabolical circles the devil may invent or his helpmeets acquire will be of small avail when the leaping tongues of flame[1] curl round you, false servant of the devil. I can delay no longer. I will repair to the council at once, and report what I have seen.

(*Betty faints away, or does she pretend? Cotton is at once all paternal solicitude. Adonijah gazes in stupefaction. All unobserved Charles slips out of the clock. Finally Adonijah, as Betty shows signs of reviving, tears himself away, but turns to find himself fairly rubbing noses with Charles. Adonijah stops dead in his tracks, absolutely nonplussed.*)

[1] Twenty persons were executed for witchcraft in Salem in 1692.

Charles. Thou goest to the council? Thou lackest evidence. Behold the devil an thou wilt. (*Adonijah's jaw drops; he stares unbelievingly. Cotton looks up in surprise as Charles continues.*) An thou goest to the council with such a message, the devil will dog thy very footsteps. And he will match word of thine with word of truth in such a light that thine own words will imprison thee in the stocks over Sunday.

(*Adonijah recovers from his temporary abstraction, and, seizing his hat and tippet, tears out the door as if a whole legion of imps were in full pursuit. Charles contemptuously turns on his heel and goes over to Betty, who is now clinging to her father's arm.*)

Betty (*weakly*). They will not burn me for a witch?

Charles (*savagely*). Let them try it an they will!

Cotton. Aye, let them! (*Then starting suddenly with a new thought*) But how cam'st thou here? Verily, it seemeth to me thou didst materialize out of thin air. (*Surveys Charles with piercing scrutiny.*)

Charles. Nay, see through me an thou canst. Thou wilt find me a most material shadow, the like of which no eye hath ever pierced. 'Twas not out of the air, but out of yonder clock that I materialized.

Betty. Yea, father, I put him there.

Cotton (*going to the clock and opening it*). Yea, of a truth, the evidence, all told, is here. Thou wert of a certainty in the clock. (*Takes out the detached pendulum. Steps back and surveys the timepiece whose hands clearly indicate a time long passed or not yet come.*) And as far

as pendulums are concerned, (*looking ruefully at the one in his hand*) thou certainly wert no improve ——

Charles. Aye, that I'll warrant. And may I never more be called to fulfill such position; the requirements be far too exacting for one of my build and constitution.

Cotton. But what extremity hath induced thee to take abode in such a place? (*Lays the pendulum aside and gives Charles his entire attention.*)

Charles. Why, that came all in the course of events as I take it. When I returned a short time ago, hard upon mine heels came Adonijah; and, being loath either to leave the field or share it, I hid within the clock. Once there, the temptation to help time in covering its course grew strong upon me in the hope that Adonijah, misled by the lateness of the hour, would soon depart. Only I looked not for such a departure. (*Seriously, turning more directly to Cotton*) Judge me not too harshly, Sir, for I love thy daughter, and if thou wilt give thy consent to our marriage I will do all that becometh a man to deserve such treasure.

Cotton. I like not thy frivolous manner of wearing hair that is not thine own; it becomes thee not. And I strongly mistrust thine attitude toward the more serious things of life.

Charles. If my wig standeth between me and my heart's desire, why, I'll have no wig at all. (*He pulls the wig off and tosses it aside.*[1] *Betty, with a little cry, picks it up and smooths its disarranged curls.*) And as for mine

[1] Charles wears a barrister's, or Colonial, wig over a short brown wig. The latter must be securely fastened to his head with adhesive tape.

outlook on life, I promise thee that hath but matched the outer trappings, and can be doffed as quickly. I am as serious beneath all outward levity as any sober-minded judge, and can act accordingly.

Cotton. See to it that thou suit the action to those words. My heart is strangely moved toward thee, yet I would ponder the matter more deeply. (*Turns to Betty, who has been absent-mindedly twirling the curls of the wig.*) And where is thy voice, my daughter? Thou art strangely silent — (*as an afterthought*) for the once. But it is of small wonder, since thou hast had enough excitement for one evening. (*Suddenly*) Methinks that scoundrel, Adonijah, needeth following up. Do thou remain with Betty, Charles, and I will hasten after him. (*Goes quickly toward the door.*)

Charles. Nay, thou need'st not trouble thyself regarding Adonijah. He hath much too wholesome a regard for the ducking stool to cause further mischief.

Cotton. Nevertheless I will away to the council and make sure. (*He plants his hat on his head and departs.*)

Charles (*turning to Betty, who has dropped the wig on the settee and is now gazing demurely at the floor*). And now to finish up where we left off. The devil hath led us a merrier dance than we suspected. Thou hast not truly given answer to the question I have asked of thee.

Betty. What more of an answer wouldst thou yet require?

Charles. Why, I have yet had none at all.

Betty. Must tell thee further?

Charles (*gravely*). Thou must.

Betty (*mischievously*). Then — put the question once again.

Charles. Thou knowest the question, an thou wilt.

Betty. And thou knowest the answer. (*Betty holds up her hand so that the ring sparkles.*) Look, Charles, — the diabolical circle!

CURTAIN

FIGUREHEADS

BY

LOUISE SAUNDERS

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CHARACTERS

The Princess Felicia of Ponderay
Gertruda
Guard
The Prince of Domdometer
A Servant

FIGUREHEADS

An actor in gorgeous oriental costume appears before the curtain.

He speaks:

People — you who sit on the benches and look up at me waiting — how may we serve you? Is it your wish to be amused? Shall we give you the grotesque, magnified a thousand times to draw your laughter? Would you rather be stirred? Shall we show you how red wrath can bite, or would you prefer that we sound the heavy gongs of tragedy, once — again — *again* — shrouding your hearts in purple grief? Would you that we set jealousy to prowling on the stage with the guarded grace of a panther? Shall it be something wild, pagan, soulless, blowing before your eyes like paper in a hurricane, or a tale of love — the pursuit of a nymph through leafy forests, or the passion of some Harlequin for Columbine — a thing of roses and moonlight, as fragile as a butterfly's wing?

Do not, however, ask us for reality — do not ask us for life — because reality is dull and life is full of husks! Would you be here if we did not know how to concentrate the thin, scattered color of the world for you — as if we drew salt out of the sea into a snowy mound, so that you might sift it through your fingers like sand, as if we pried gold from the rocks to make a ball of it, or a dagger to stab your spirits? Ha, we have you there, for what can

you do if we should choose to use our knives! But no, suppose we give you the story of a princess to-night, a princess who might have lived anywhere, anywhen. Look down the centuries and select a year for her, but go to the realms of fantasy for her kingdom. Only there can you find a land that glows like colored glass, undimmed by cloud or mark of time.

I shall part the curtains and reveal to you our scene. If it meets with your approval, we shall proceed.

(*He draws the curtains, revealing the stage darkened and the players motionless.*)

We infer, from your kind applause, that so far we have pleased you. Let the play, therefore, begin.

The PRINCESS OF PONDERAY *is having her long red-gold hair brushed by* GERTRUDA, *her maid. She is lying on a low purple divan in a room overlooking the sea, whose blue shows through a great round window at the back. Leading up to the window are shallow steps covered with silken rugs. Three musicians, sitting on the floor, play languorous music. The Princess is absorbed in the contemplation of her bracelets, as she holds her arms in the air and lazily waves them to and fro. Suddenly she sits up.*

Princess (*excitedly*). You pulled some of it out! I saw you trying to hide it in the pocket of your apron!

(*Gertruda, a fat, comfortable woman in a full gown of rich silk, drops the brush and comb and clutches her pocket.*)

Gertruda (*terrified, backing away*). No, Highness. You are mistaken.

Princess (*striding over to her*). I'm not mistaken. Let

me see what you have there. (*To the musicians*) Stop that noise!

Gertruda. Nothing, nothing, Majesty, I can assure you.

Princess (*seizing her by the wrist*). Let me see. (*She puts her hand in Gertruda's pocket and draws out a little fluff of hair. With an exclamation she holds it up between her thumb and finger.*) Do you call that nothing? Idiot! My beautiful hair! You would ruin it with your clumsy stupidity. You would tear it out, little by little, until there wasn't any left. *No.* This is your punishment. You shall not be allowed to touch it again.

Gertruda. Highness, it is impossible to dress it without a little coming out in the comb. Every one's hair ——

Princess. Every one's hair! Do you see anything in common between this and any other hair in the world?

Gertruda. No, no, Highness. It is truly as different as the sun is from the ——

Princess (*sinking on the couch*). Then never speak to me of "everybody's hair" again. Not one of mine must be sacrificed, not *one.*

Gertruda (*picking up the brush and comb and coming toward her ingratiatingly*). It was for my little niece, Highness. I shouldn't have promised her, I know, but she pleaded so hard, poor child. "Aunt," she said to me, "you brush the princess's glorious hair," said she. "Couldn't you get me the tiniest little strand to put in a locket to wear over my heart?" she said. It was pitiful!

(*The Princess smiles. She turns over and looks at Gertruda.*)

"And perhaps," she said, "some day I may be worthy

to dress those wondrous locks myself," she said. I've always had a tender heart, Highness. It's like a lump of butter, as you know. "I'll try," I told her, "though it's as much as my life is worth." Well, now it's over. I must pay for my little impulse of generosity. (*She weeps.*) But at least, your Highness will grant me one boon. Let me take to my niece the little lock of hair that has caused her poor, unhappy aunt's downfall.

Princess. There, there, Gertruda, I'll forgive you this time. Only never let it happen again. (*She holds out the hair.*) You may give her this and tell her that I shall order sent to her a little gold locket, rimmed with pearls, in which to keep it.

Gertruda (*rapturously, as she kisses the hem of the Princess's dress*). Your Highness is too, *too* good!

Princess. Never mind that. Go on with my hair. (*Gertruda braids the Princess's hair.*) She is a child of taste, your niece.

Gertruda (*her eyes to heaven*). Exquisite, Majesty, exquisite!

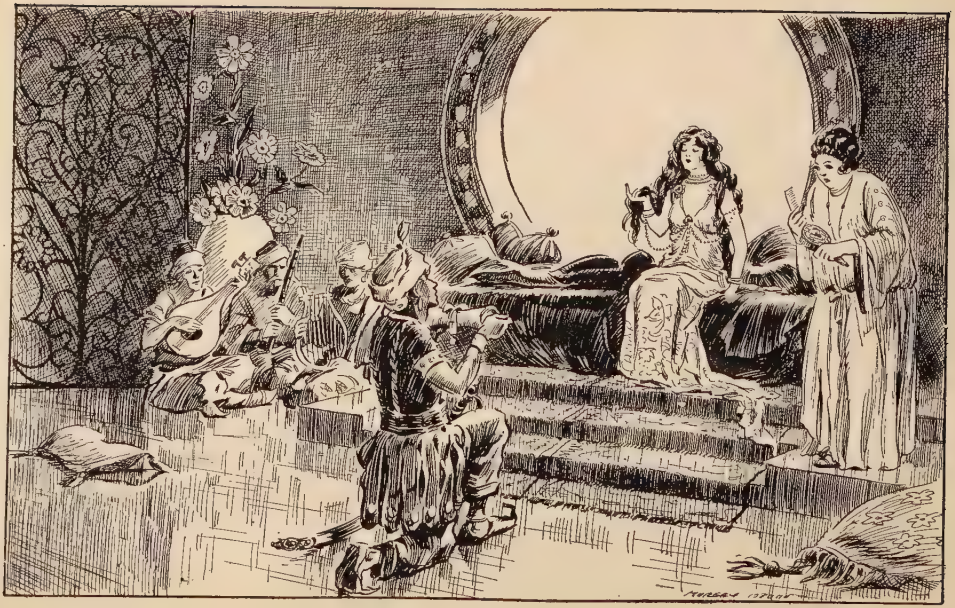
Princess. And her aunt is clever. (*To the musicians*) Play. (*They play softly. The Princess yawns.*) Pay me a compliment, Gertruda.

Gertruda. Her Highness's tresses are like ——

Princess (*pouting*). Oh, not spun gold. You have said that so often before.

Gertruda. There is nothing better than gold, Highness.

Princess. Nothing better than gold? I wonder if that's true. But love, Gertruda — you are always talking to me of love.



"Your Highness, I have a message . . ."

Gertruda (*sentimentally*). Ah, love! Love is the sweetest story ever told.

Princess. Something tells me that you are right, Gertruda. Not the sweetest, but the most — (*She draws a long breath.*) the most exciting!

Gertruda. If our gracious Highness would only listen to the suit of our neighbor, the Prince of Domdometer ——

(*The Princess, in a rage, hurls a cushion at Gertruda, who dodges it, so that it hits a musician full in the face and stops his playing abruptly.*)

Princess. Haven't I told you never to mention his name to me again?

Gertruda. But your subjects wish it, Highness ——

Princess. My subjects! Who are they that they should dictate to *me!* Am I not an autocrat? I rule them with a rod of iron. They cringe before me. Cringe, Gertruda, at once. Cringe!

(*Gertruda cringes, abjectly.*)

(*The Princess giggles.*) Oh, Gertruda, you cringe so beautifully.

(*There is a knock at the door. Gertruda, still trembling, parts the curtains and opens it.*)

Gertruda. One of the guards, sweet Majesty.

Princess. Let him enter.

(*A* GUARD *comes in and kneels before the Princess. He carries a roll of parchment.*)

Guard. Your Highness, I have a message from the envoys of the Prince of Domdometer.

Princess. What! Shall I never be rid of these envoys? Must I have them carried in carts to the edge of the city and dumped over the wall?

Guard. They have been waiting for your Highness to grant them the honor of an interview for six weeks.

Princess. I shall never grant them an interview. And what is more, I wish them to leave my country at once.

Guard. Your Highness is aware that the uniting of the two kingdoms of Ponderay and Domdometer is greatly to be desired. It would strengthen our position enormously, and probably avert the war that threatens us both on the north.

Princess. I don't care. That's absolutely no reason why I should marry some one I don't choose to marry. Do you think I am a mere figurehead to be ordered about?

Guard. Your people ——

Princess. My people! You can tell them to leave it to me. I am their ruler, do you hear? I care nothing for their desires. Besides, I may think of a much better plan — sometime.

Guard. The envoys from the Prince of Domdometer wished me to give you these papers (*He hands the parchment to the Princess.*), in which they have written their urgent reasons for the union of the two countries.

(*She seizes the parchment and, tearing it again and again, dashes it out the window.*)

Princess. You can tell them that I have torn their reasons into a thousand pieces and thrown them into the sea, and that's how much good they did. Must I be crowned over again before you realize that I am the

Princess and I will not be told what to do — least of all, whom to marry? Go, all of you! (*The Princess stands at the window while the Guard, Gertruda, and the musicians bow themselves out; then she throws herself on the purple divan and buries her face in her arms, passionately weeping.*) How dare they! I wish I were dead — that's what I wish. Then they would see how much they need me. Then they would be sorry they hadn't left me alone and let me do as I pleased. I wish I were dead!

(*The* PRINCE OF DOMDOMETER *nimbly leaps through the window. His clothes are those of a poor man, a peasant, but around his neck hang two jeweled insignia, which he hides, after he has entered the room, under his gray shirt. He stands looking at the Princess, who continues to weep, more impatiently than sadly, and to give little furious kicks with her feet. The Prince of Domdometer gazes about the room, then tiptoes to the left, takes up, curiously, one of the musicians' instruments and sits on the floor examining it.*)

Princess (*wailing*). I wish I were dead! I wish I were dead!

Prince (*still looking over the instrument*). Patience, dear lady. There is nothing surer than that your wish will be granted some day.

(*She sits up in astonishment.*)

And then, perhaps, you will wish you were alive, which will be a desire more worthy of your tears than this crying for a thing that will, in good time, inevitably come to pass.

Princess. Who are you?

Prince (*bowing*). A poor man, fair lady, a fisherman

by trade, I might say, for though I have never caught a fish, still I do own the nets which some day, perhaps, if I feel in the mood, I may use.

Princess. What are you doing? How did you get in this room? Do you know that you are in the presence of the princess?

Prince. Examining this lute, which I see is a fine one. By the sea. I do, quite well.

Princess. By the sea? You swam?

Prince. Yes, Princess, and lay on the rocks below your window, like a lizard in the sun, until I was dry enough to enter your presence.

Princess. You wanted to see the princess so much, poor fisherman, that you risked your life for a glimpse of her?

(*He bows.*)

You love me, I suppose — humbly, as one would a star!

Prince. Not at all. I love no one but myself, and humanity, of course, since humanity one can love and still neglect.

Princess. Then why ——

Prince. I come as a messenger, your Highness, from the Prince of Domdometer.

(*The Princess gives a shriek of rage and hurls the cushions at him, one after the other. He catches them dexterously.*)

I infer that these cushions annoy your Highness. Shall we banish them? (*He tosses them out the window.*)

Princess. I wish that you could do away with this prince so easily, who tortures me with his attentions until I am fairly *mad.*

Prince. Your Highness, I can quite understand your unwillingness to marry the Prince of Domdometer, who is, I'll admit, but a poor fellow ——

Princess. You say that, his messenger?

Prince. No one knows it better than I. Still you must realize that he is as averse to marrying you, Princess, as you are to marrying him, and it is only because the welfare of the state demands it that he is willing to make the sacrifice.

Princess. Sacrifice!

Prince (*bowing*). The prince, your Highness, desires to live his life with as few incumbrances as possible.

Princess. Listen, fisherman — come here to me. I am, oh, so unhappy — really in great trouble! Have you no pity?

Prince. Not to give to those who keep so much of their own pity for themselves, little princess.

Princess (*stamping her foot*). But I am unhappy, you hard-hearted fisherman!

Prince. And who is not, Princess? The world inevitably equips us with trouble as nature equips us with teeth. Do you know of any one to whom you can point and say "He had none"? And the more of our joys we take for granted, the further we walk into unhappiness. "If only I were fed," cries the starving one, "I should be happy." But as soon as he is fed he forgets his relief from the pangs of hunger and longs for something else. Eternal struggle — eternal reaching up for things at which we scarcely glance when we have them, so intent are we to procure that which hangs on the peg above. But there are two troubles, Princess Felicia, more absorbing, more terrifically painful

than all the rest! Beside them the others seem pale things indeed. They are hunger and the realization that the rest of mankind considers us of little importance — lack of prestige, in short. Those two, you may be sure, your Highness will always be spared, if you behave yourself and do as you are told.

Princess. Do as I am told! *Never!* (*She stretches out her arms luxuriously.*) My people should realize that they are fortunate enough to have ruling over them a princess — with temperament!

Prince. They would prefer, no doubt, a princess with judgment, unless she will consent to be a figurehead. In that case the temperament would go very nicely.

Princess. A mere figurehead ——

Prince. Is there any position more enviable than that of figurehead, Princess? Think. To be placed high above the world, with no function but that of looking pleasant — above its labors, responsibilities, and troubles. To be carried along, as an important part of the ship of state, but bearing none of the burdens of the voyage.

Princess. Oh, you don't understand. What can a poor fisherman know of the cares and anxieties of royalty?

Prince. I know that it is better to be a fisherman than the fish on his hook, but even the fisherman must be clever, must seem to humor his fish a little, for if he does not there is danger of his being pulled into the water. Your people have never asked anything else of you, Princess, and think what they have bestowed upon you! This palace, those jewels, soft couches, musicians to play to you, their homage — You will have to marry where they please. It

is your way of paying. If you don't pay — who knows what might happen?

Princess. Come here. I want to tell you something.

(*He starts to sit down. She rises indignantly.*)

A fisherman may not sit in the presence of a princess.

Prince. I ask your pardon.

Princess (*smiling*). Well, you may, since there is no one to see. It is much nicer.

Prince. Thank you.

Princess (*confidentially*). Fisherman, you see I am very young and I feel that I have within me — (*She hesitates, then looks at him from under lowered lids.*) infinite possibilities.

Prince. True. They are infinite.

Princess (*passionately*). Then, in order to annex the kingdoms of Domdometer and Ponderay must I, in gaining this prince, lose *love?*

Prince. Not as great a loss, Princess, as you have been led to believe.

Princess (*astonished*). You don't value love?

Prince. Many kinds of love, yes — the love given us by children, for instance, since that reflects some good in ourselves — but woman's love — it is largely vanity. It is like a squash, beautiful, round, imposing — three parts water.

Princess. Oh ——

Prince. If a woman sees in a man's eyes a flattering mirror she thinks she loves him, whereas it is only the idealization of herself that she sees there that she loves.

Princess. I don't know what you mean, but it sounds silly.

Prince (*thoughtfully, his hands clasped round his knees*). But as well expect a good soldier, fully armed, to stay out of battle as a lovely woman to keep out of love. Its victories are so sweet — how can she remember that one day will come — defeat?

Princess. But victories first! Many, many victories first!

Prince (*shrugging his shoulders*). Yes, if you think them worth the trouble.

Princess. I think them worth dying for!

Prince (*intensely*). No, Princess Felicia, you think nothing worth dying for — that's just it. And for that reason I must warn you, if you don't consent to marry me ——

Princess (*laughing*). *You!*

Prince (*his hand on his lips*). A mistake, your Highness.

Princess. There's an idea! I'll marry you!

Prince (*he strokes his chin, thoughtfully, looking at her*). Why?

Princess (*excitedly*). That will teach them a lesson! That will show them who is the real ruler of this kingdom, and your Prince of Domdometer, too! (*Pacing up and down*) He sends a messenger, a fisherman, to plead for him. I refuse the hand of the prince for that of the messenger. It's delicious! (*Pointing a finger at him*) You can't refuse. I command you.

Prince. Refuse, Princess? Oh, no, I shall not refuse.

Princess. Then, I'll have them upside down! They

won't know what to make of it, poor things, but they will never again try to impose their wills on me — after they have once seen the consequence. It will be as if I had laughed in their solemn old faces — (*She stops.*) Fisherman, does it make you happy?

Prince. I confess the idea is not unpleasing to me.

Princess. When — when shall I marry you? What a triumph!

Prince (*seriously, standing in front of her*). Do you mean this?

Princess (*joyfully*). Oh, I do, I do! You need have no fear. There will be a great change in your life, fisherman, after to-day.

Prince. Princess, you don't know who I am. I am not a fisherman ——

Princess. I don't care who you are!

Prince (*thinking quickly*). You will marry me, no matter who I am?

Princess (*dancing away from him*). Yes, yes, yes, yes! What does it matter, as long as it takes their breath away?

Prince (*following her*). You promise?

Princess. Nothing but death can prevent me.

Prince. Say "I swear to marry you no matter who you are ——"

Princess (*impatiently*). What a nuisance! Are you that kind of person ——

Prince. No, but I borrow that kind of person's methods once in a while, and this time it is quite necessary, as you will see in a minute.

Princess. Well, then, I swear to marry you no matter who you are. Are you satisfied now?

Prince. Quite. But my satisfaction is tempered with regret at having to tell you that I am — the Prince of Domdometer.

Princess (*she stares at him in utter astonishment, which changes to rage and hatred. In a choked voice*). I don't believe you.

(*He exhibits, without a word, the jewelled insignia around his neck. She turns furiously to the divan for a cushion to throw at him.*)

Prince. You have banished them, Felicia. (*He leans out the window.*) They are there, far below, on the rocks. That is the trouble with banishment. I have invariably found that the banished one was, after all, in spite of his iniquities, useful.

Princess (*drawing in a long breath, through closed teeth*). Oh — you cheat! You are all of you cheats!

Prince. Perhaps. But, remember, you have given your promise.

Princess. Nothing but death can prevent me, I said. I shall call the guards to hurl you from the window. You are a peasant, they will think. You have intruded — annoyed me. It will be short work to send you crashing to the rocks!

Prince. Very thrilling, Princess, and an easy way out of your difficulties. If you do that I shall admire you, enormously, for a woman of conviction and character.

Princess (*scornfully*). You would have little time for that.

Prince. Oh, yes. This tower is high. All the while I was flipping, flopping, turning through the air, like a

fish, thrown by its tail over a wall, I should be admiring you. But you won't do it. You haven't the courage.

Princess. It is you who need courage.

Prince. Oh, no, Princess, since it would be only a relief to me to slip the world from my shoulders like a muddy cloak. When a heart cries as clamorously as mine, how often does one long to still it forever with a sharp stab of sudden pain! (*He shrugs his shoulders.*) But we must live, Princess. That's a rule one feels, blindly enough, one may not break. We are all part of a great game, and when the veiled player has set a little top a-spinning, it must keep it up until its time is over.

Princess. You think I don't dare?

Prince. No, you don't dare, because you are a little kitten woman. You have not the force, you have not the ability, you have not the innate hardness and cruelty to be a real ruler. That is why they make of you a figurehead.

(*She stamps her feet.*)

A very charming little figurehead — and why should you care? These "leaders of men," how they shout, how they bellow, how they run back and forth and grow red in the face, trying to make the herds go down a road of their choosing instead of another, only to be trampled at last, even if they succeed, under a thousand hoofs! Do you want to be one of those in the dust and clamor? Rather let us watch them from a balcony, sitting cross-legged, our toes tucked delicately under our knees, cool, serene, and happy!

Princess (*angrily*). You are talking absolute non-

sense. It doesn't mean anything. I am a real ruler. I *am* a woman of character, I *am !*

Prince. Prove it by having me thrown from the window.

Princess. You seem almost to want me to.

Prince. No, not at all. And that proves that I am not unmindful of my duties as prince, for the only real service I can do my kingdom is to marry you. How gladly would I have given my life to accomplish it, but if I gave my life it could never be accomplished, so I was forced to trick you into it. I am very sorry, but it had to be done. You won't have me killed. You couldn't. For though you know how to scratch and spit, little kitten, you will always draw in your claws before they do real hurt.

Princess. Oh, if you knew how I *hated* you! You have gone too far. Take back what you said, every word, or you will pay for it — with death!

(*He smiles. Exasperated, almost to frenzy, she strikes the gong a hard blow. Two guards appear.*)

This fellow had the presumption to climb up the tower into my window. He has annoyed me. Throw him out, to the rocks.

Guard. But, your Highness ——

Princess. Do as I command!

Prince. May I request that you tell them to throw me with force, so that my eventual destination may be the water rather than the rocks? It will be pleasanter for me and for you too, perhaps, afterward, or I wouldn't mention it.

Princess (*with closed eyes*). Tie him, hand and foot, so that he cannot swim, and throw him into the sea.

Guard. Highness, we have nothing ——

Princess. Use this. (*She seizes a scarf of peacock blue and tears it across.*) And this.

(*The guards tie the Prince's feet. He holds out his hands, which they bind with the scarf. They lift him.*)

Guards. Now ——

Princess (*she gives a shriek of terror and throws herself upon them*). You blockheads! I didn't mean it! Put him down! *Put him down!* I tell you! How can you have been so stupid? Didn't you know that I was just testing you? Go, go at once!

(*The guards go out. Breathlessly and half-sobbing she unties the scarfs and kisses the Prince's wrists.*)

Oh, my beloved! I almost had you thrown into the sea!

Prince. You did.

Princess. Oh, how I love you! Can you ever forgive me? What was I but a bundle of dry sticks that you have kindled to leaping flames! What was I but a little empty cup into which you have thrown a jewel! And then to treat you like that! It was monstrous! Oh, I love you! Say that you will forgive me. Listen — I shall make it up to you. You will see. I will be to you sweet nectar, such as you have never known in your life before. I will give you heady wine that will make you forget the world and live only to taste it again. When you are unhappy I shall share your sorrow, when you are glad I will double your joy ——

Prince (*freeing himself from her embrace*). You must not read so many books. They make you talk like that. When I am unhappy it will be, no doubt, often because you have made me so, and I hope that I may have joys which you do not share, else what would I do when you were campaigning for those victories you prophesied just now? Those "many, many victories"?

Princess (*pouting*). That's not nice of you. Every beat of my heart says "Prince of Domdometer, Prince of my soul, Prince of Domdometer, Prince of my soul!"

Prince (*laughing*). Every beat of your heart says "Me, me, me, *me*" — and it's a more normal little heart for that reason, for if it should try to say so acrobatic a thing as "Prince of Domdometer, Prince of my soul," it would soon be out of order.

Princess (*sadly*). You don't admire me now.

Prince. Oh, I do, I do, very much indeed. I admire your red-gold hair — who could help it? — and your pretty white skin. As for your convictions and your character — shall a figurehead marry a woman of conviction? Never. Soft little kitten women do better for him.

Princess. Well, I think if it has to be one or the other, I would rather that you admired my hair than my convictions.

Prince. Wisely spoken, Princess, and when my envoys come to you, asking your hand, will you say "yes"?

Princess (*passionately*). A thousand times, yes.

Prince. Once will be sufficient. Come, Princess, sit here with me, and I will give you a treat. Have you ever tasted bread and cheese?

Princess. Bread and cheese?

(*They sit down on the shallow steps leading to the window. He takes some yellow cheese and a piece of bread from the leather bag at his waist.*)

Prince. There is nothing better, Princess Felicia, than bread and cheese. It represents the facts of life. I am what I am! But it is seldom given to us rulers. We have to find it for ourselves.

Princess (*tasting it*). It is good. Oh, so good!

Prince. Exactly. Let us stick to it. (*He takes one of her long braids and winds it about their necks as they sit together.*) When I was climbing the tower I received a shower of paper full in my face. Can you explain that interesting phenomenon?

Princess (*purring*). They were reasons, beloved, why I ought to marry you.

Prince (*thoughtfully*). Mmmm — they almost made me lose my balance.

Princess. Did they, poor dear one? Kiss me.

Prince. If I kissed you, it would only make me want to kiss you again.

Princess (*eating the bread and cheese*). Well, you could.

Prince. And those two kisses would serve what purpose? Only to make a third kiss desirable, and that a fourth, so that when I left you, as I must very soon, the thought of the fifth one would fill me with longing to be here, so that I might capture it. What is the use in deliberately creating a wish for a thing one may not satisfy?

Princess. You won't long for me now, when you go away?

Prince. Not particularly.

Princess (*wailing*). Oh!

Prince. Never mind. When I have once decided to plunge into the sea of love I shall sink to the bottom, view the world, distorted and greened through its waters, and ask for nothing more than permission to lie there forever.

Princess (*clapping her hands*). Oh, how happy I shall be then!

Prince. Yes, you greedy little tyrant! Women are always made happy when they have overthrown a man's reason and robbed him of his judgment, his two most precious possessions.

Princess. How beautiful you look when you talk! Oh I do love you so! You are so strong! You are like a tall, slim pillar, reaching to the sky. (*She giggles.*) What a *crash* there will be when you fall!

Prince. Take care, Princess. If you warn me like that of the consequences, I may refuse to kiss you at all.

Princess (*pleadingly*). Oh, please ——

Prince. Perhaps, if you are good. But I am resolved to stay on shore as long as possible, and in the meantime — bread and cheese!

(*There is a loud knock at the door. Gertruda's frightened voice outside*)

Gertruda. Highness, sweet Majesty — Oh, your Highness!

Princess (*excitedly*). You must go.

(*He climbs through the window and stands on a ledge outside.*)

Wait there, please. I have more to say to you. Crouch down a little. Can you do it? Oh, don't fall!

(*He lowers himself so that only his hand, clutching the window, is visible.*)

Prince. Hurry, Princess. This is not a position in which I would care to stay very long.

(*She sounds the gong. Gertruda enters, breathless with excitement, and flings herself at the Princess's feet.*)

Gertruda. There's trouble, your Highness! Oh, woe is me! It's terrible, terrible, terrible! "You ungrateful dogs," I shouted at them, "don't you dare disturb my sweet Majesty!" "Sweet Majesty!" they jeered back, and threw a stick at me. It hit me on the arm. Not that I mind, but when ——

Princess (*impatiently*). What is the matter, Gertruda? Speak plainly!

Gertruda. Such trouble, Highness — and not a word could I ——

(*A guard enters rapidly. He kneels before the Princess.*)

Guard. Your Highness, an angry crowd is swelling at the gates of the palace. We fear a revolution. Ever since your Highness refused to give an audience to the envoys of the prince, there has been intense unrest in the capital ——

Gertruda (*weeping*). I tried to keep it from you, Majesty, as best I ——

Guard. And now that they have heard from one who was in the room at the time (*He pauses and looks at Gertruda.*) —

Gertruda. Not I, Majesty. No, never, as long as ——

Guard. Now that they have heard of your Highness' tearing up the envoy's message to you and throwing it into the sea, they demand, in spite of all that we can do, that you give audience ——

Princess. Oh, is that all! Tell them to come at once. I shall receive them.

Guard (*astonished*). You will ——

Gertruda (*gasping*). Majesty!

Princess. You may tell the people at the gate that I am hurt at their lack of trust in me. Do they not know that my only desire is to serve them as best I can? Since it is their wish that I marry this prince, I shall bend my will to theirs, though my heart in doing it should break.

Gertruda. No, no ——

Guard. Your Highness will marry the Prince of Domdometer?

Princess. What better could I do with my life than to sacrifice it in the interest of Ponderay? Go! I have spoken! (*She waves him away. He goes out.*)

Gertruda. Oh, my noble Highness! A martyr, a martyr to your country's good! They will not forget — your people, they will never forget. Oh, sweet Majesty!

Princess. Be quiet, Gertruda. Do that outside, if you must.

(*Gertruda, still overcome, goes out. The Princess flies to the window.*)

Beloved!

(*The Prince's head and shoulders appear again.*)

Was not that nice?

Prince. Beautiful.

Princess. And now good-by. (*She leans over as he clings with both arms to the window and kisses him lightly.*)

Prince. Felicia, that was a mean advantage to have taken of my position. You shouldn't have done that, but — do it again.

Princess. No, not again. It will be a little string, tied around your heart and mine.

Prince. I don't want to fall in love with you, Felicia. It would be a nuisance.

Princess (*happily*). You won't be able to help it!

(*There is a sound of trumpets.*)

Now go. When next we meet, we shall be clothed in jewels and robes of state — beautiful figureheads!

(*He disappears, climbing down the tower. She leans out, looking at him.*)

How your hair shines in the sun! I love you!

Prince (*from below*). How yours glorifies the shadow! I love you!

Princess. Where is your reason and your judgment, my Prince?

Prince's Voice. They have just come to me.

Princess. Shall I throw you this bit of bread and cheese, wise one, or would you prefer a rose?

Prince. A rose from you, always. A rose!

(*She breaks a rose from a vine climbing the tower, kisses it, and tosses it down to him. Then she turns swiftly into the room, her eyes shining, and makes a gesture of triumph, the same gesture that she made a short while before when she*

said, "What a crash there will be when you fall." A louder blast of trumpets. She flies to the couch and assumes an attitude of great dignity. The guard parts the curtains and announces, ceremoniously.)

Guard. Envoys with message from his royal Highness, the Prince of Domdometer!

CURTAIN

THE ROMANCERS

BY

EDMOND ROSTAND

Translated by
BARRETT H. CLARK

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PERSONS IN THE PLAY

Sylvette	
Percinet	
Straforel	
Bergamin	Percinet's father
Pasquinot	Sylvette's father

Swordsmen, musicians, torch-bearers, etc.

The action takes place anywhere, provided the costumes are pretty.

THE ROMANCERS

The stage is divided by an old wall, covered with vines and flowers. At the right, a corner of Bergamin's private park; at the left, a corner of Pasquinot's. On each side of the wall, and against it, is a rustic bench.

As the curtain rises, PERCINET *is seated on the top of the wall. On his knee is a book, out of which he is reading to* SYLVETTE, *who stands attentively listening on the bench which is on the other side of the wall.*

Sylvette. Monsieur Percinet, how divinely beautiful!

Percinet. Is it not? Listen to what Romeo answers: (*Reading*)

"It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale: look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops:
I must begone" ——

Sylvette (*interrupts him, as she listens*). Sh!

Percinet (*listens a moment, then*). No one! But, Mademoiselle, you must not take fright like a startled bird. Hear the immortal lovers:

"*Juliet.* Yon light is not the daylight. I know it, I,
It is some meteor that the sun exhales,

To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,
And light thee on thy way to Mantua:
Therefore stay yet, thou need'st not to be gone.

Romeo. Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death;
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say, yon gray is not the morning's eye,
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow;
Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat
The vaulty heaven so high above our heads:
I have more care to stay than will to go:
Come, death and welcome" ——

Sylvette. No, he must not say such things, or I shall cry.

Percinet. Then let us stop and read no more until to-morrow. We shall let Romeo live! (*He closes the book and looks about him.*) This charming spot was expressly made, it seems to me, to echo the words of the Divine Will!

Sylvette. The verses are divine, and the soft air here is a divine accompaniment. And see, these green shades! But, Monsieur Percinet, what makes them divine to me is the way you read!

Percinet. Flatterer!

Sylvette (*sighing*). Poor lovers! Their fate was cruel! (*Another sigh*) I think ——

Percinet. What?

Sylvette. Nothing!

Percinet. Something that made you blush red as a rose.

Sylvette. Nothing, I say.

Percinet. Ah, that's too transparent. I see it all: you are thinking of our fathers!

Sylvette. Perhaps ——

Percinet. Of their terrible hatred for each other.

Sylvette. The thought often pains me and makes me cry when I am alone. Last month, when I came home from the convent, my father pointed out your father's park, and said to me: "My dear child, you behold there the domain of my mortal enemy, Bergamin. Never cross the path of those two rascals, Bergamin and his son Percinet. Mark well my words, and obey me to the letter, or I shall cast you off as an enemy. Their family has always been at bitter enmity with our own." And I promised. But you see how I keep my word!

Percinet. Did I not promise my father to do the same, Sylvette? Yet I love you!

Sylvette. Holy saints!

Percinet. I love you, my dearest!

Sylvette. It's sinful!

Percinet. Very — but what can we do? The greater the obstacles to be overcome, the sweeter the reward. Sylvette, kiss me!

Sylvette. Never! (*She jumps down from the bench and runs off a few steps.*)

Percinet. But you love me?

Sylvette. What?

Percinet. My dear child: I, too, sometimes think of us and compare you and me with those other lovers — of Verona.

Sylvette. But *I* didn't compare —!

Percinet. You and I are Juliet and Romeo; I love you to despair, and I shall brave the wrath of Pasquinot-Capulet and Bergamin-Montague!

Sylvette (*coming a little nearer to the wall*). Then we are really in love? But how, Monsieur Percinet, has it happened so soon?

Percinet. Love is born we know not how, because it must be born. I often saw you pass my window ——

Sylvette. I saw you, too!

Percinet. And our eyes spoke in silence.

Sylvette. One day I was gathering nuts in the garden by the wall ——

Percinet. One day I happened to be reading Shakespeare. See how everything conspired to unite two hearts!

Sylvette. And a little gust of wind blew my scarf in your direction.

Percinet. I climbed to the wall to return it ——

Sylvette (*climbing the wall again*). I climbed too!

Percinet. And since that day, my dear, I have waited at the same hour, here by this wall; and each time my heart beat louder and faster, until I knew by your soft laugh that you were near!

Sylvette. Now since we are in love, we must be married.

Percinet. I was just thinking about that.

Sylvette (*solemnly*). I, last of the Pasquinots, do solemnly pledge myself to you, last of the Bergamins.

Percinet. What noble recklessness!

Sylvette. Our story shall be sung in future ages!

Percinet. Two tender children of two hard-hearted fathers!

Sylvette. But who knows whether the hour is not at hand when our fathers' hatred may end?

Percinet. I doubt it.

Sylvette. I have heard of far stranger things. I can think of half a dozen ——

Percinet. What, for instance?

Sylvette. Imagine that the reigning prince comes riding past some day — I run to him and kneel, and tell him the story of our love and of our fathers' hatred. The prince asks to see my father and Bergamin. Tableau of reconciliation.

Percinet. And your father gives me your hand!

Sylvette. Yes. Or else, you languish, the doctor declares you cannot live ——

Percinet. And asks: "What ails you?"

Sylvette. And you answer: "I must have Sylvette!"

Percinet. His resolution fails: his pride is broken.

Sylvette. Yes. Or else: an aged duke, having seen my portrait, falls in love with me, sends a 'squire to sue for my hand, and offers to make me a duchess.

Percinet. And you say, "No!"

Sylvette. He is offended, and some dark night when I am in the garden, meditating, he springs forth out of the darkness! I scream!

Percinet. And I lose not a second in springing over the wall, dagger in hand. I fight like a tiger, I ——

Sylvette. You lay low three or four men. Then my father rushes in and takes me in his arms. You tell him who you are. His heart softens, he gives me to my savior. Your father consents, for he is proud of your bravery.

Percinet. Then we live together for years, happy and content!

Sylvette. That's not at all impossible, is it?

Percinet. Some one's coming!

Sylvette (*forgetting herself*). Kiss me!

Percinet (*kissing her*). This evening, at eight, then? As usual? You will come?

Sylvette. No.

Percinet. Yes!

Sylvette (*disappearing behind the wall*). Your father! (*Percinet jumps quickly down from the wall.*)

(*Enter* BERGAMIN.)

Bergamin. Ah, ha, I find you here again, dreaming in this corner of the park!

Percinet. Father, I love this old corner! I adore this bench over which the vines of the wall have so delicately draped themselves. See, what graceful arabesques these festoons make! The air is purer here.

Bergamin. By the side of this old wall?

Percinet. I love it!

Bergamin. I see nothing lovable about it!

Sylvette (*aside*). He can't see the reason!

Percinet. But it is charming, all covered with ivy and creeper. See here, what honeysuckle! This hundred-year-old wall, with its clinging vines, its constellations of flowers, looking through the crannies, kissed by the summer sun, is a spot fit for kings!

Bergamin. Nonsense, you harebrained youth! Do you mean to tell me that this wall has eyes?

Percinet. Ah, what eyes! (*Turns toward the wall.*) Of soft azure, yet dazzlingly blue; let but a tear come to dim your brightness, or a single kiss ——

Bergamin. But the wall hasn't eyes, you idiot!

Percinet. See this vine, though! (*He plucks part of the vine from the wall and graciously presents it to his father.*)

Sylvette (*aside*). How clever!

Bergamin. How stupid! But I know now what has turned your silly head: you come here to read! (*Sylvette starts as she hears this. Percinet also shows signs of fear as his father pulls the book from the youth's pocket.*) Plays! (*He drops the book in horror.*) And poetry, poetry! That's what has turned your head. Now I see why you talk about eyes and honeysuckle. I tell you, a wall to be useful need not be beautiful. I am going to have all this green stuff taken away, and the bricks relaid and the holes stopped up. I want a white wall and a high one to keep the neighbors from looking into our park. I want no vines or honeysuckles. Along the top I'll put broken glass ——

Percinet. Pity!

Bergamin. No pity! I insist on it! Glass — all along the top of the wall! (*Sylvette and Percinet are in despair. Bergamin sits down on the bench.*) And now I have something to say to you. (*He rises and examines the wall.*) If the wall hasn't eyes, it may possibly have ears? (*He is about to stand on the bench, when Percinet takes fright and Sylvette clings close to her side of the wall, making herself as small as she can. Bergamin decides not to scale the wall, but motions to his son to do so.*) See whether (by chance) some curious listener —?

Percinet (*climbing to the top and leaning over so that Sylvette can hear him*). Till to-night!

Sylvette (*giving him her hand, which he kisses*). I'll come on the stroke of the clock! I adore you!

Bergamin (*to Percinet*). Well?

Percinet (*jumping down — to his father*). No one!

Bergamin (*reseating himself*). Well, then, my boy, I should like to see you married off.

Sylvette (*aside*). Oh!

Bergamin. What's that?

Percinet. Nothing.

Bergamin. I thought I heard a cry?

Percinet (*looking into the air*). Some wounded bird, perhaps.

Bergamin. I have given the matter my undivided attention, and have finally chosen a wife for you. (*Percinet whistles and walks away.*) I tell you, I am in earnest and I intend to force you, if necessary. (*Percinet continues whistling.*) *Will* you stop that confounded whistling! The young woman is rich — she's a jewel!

Percinet. I want none of your jewels!

Bergamin. I'll show you, you young insolent!

Percinet (*grasping his father's cane, which is raised as if to strike him*). Spring has filled the bushes with the songs of birds; the brooklets accompany the love-notes of wild birds.

Bergamin. Rascal!

Percinet (*still holding the cane*). The whole world laughs and sings farewell to April. The butterflies ——

Bergamin. Ruffian!

Percinet (*as before*). Wing their way across the meadows, making love to adorable flowers! Love ——

Bergamin. Villain!

Percinet. Love opens wide the heart of all nature. And you ask me to consent to a marriage of reason!

Bergamin. Of course I do!

Percinet (*passionately*). No, no, no, Father. I swear by this wall — which hears me, I hope — that my marriage will be more romantic than any dreamed of in the most poetic of the world's love stories! (*He runs out.*)

Bergamin (*pursuing him*). Ah, let me catch you.

Sylvette. I can quite understand now why Papa hates that odious old man!

(*Enter* PASQUINOT, *left.*)

Pasquinot. Well, Mademoiselle, what are you doing here?

Sylvette. Nothing. Taking the air.

Pasquinot. Alone? But, you silly girl, are you not afraid?

Sylvette. Not in the least.

Pasquinot. Near this wall? I forbade you to come near it! You see that park over there? That belongs to my mortal enemy!

Sylvette. I know it, Father dear.

Pasquinot. Why, here you are exposed to any insult, any — if those rascals knew that my daughter were walking alone in this park — Brr! It makes me shiver to think of it! I'm going to have the wall repaired, and erect a huge iron grill on top of it.

Sylvette (*aside*). He'll never do it — it would cost too much!

Pasquinot. Now go into the house — quick! (*She goes out, Pasquinot glowering at her.*)

Bergamin (*heard from the other side of the wall, as he enters*). Take this note at once to Monsieur Straforel.

Pasquinot (*running to the wall and climbing to the top of it*). Bergamin!

Bergamin (*doing likewise*). Pasquinot! (*They embrace.*)

Pasquinot. How are you?

Bergamin. Pretty well.

Pasquinot. How's your gout?

Bergamin. Better. And how is your cold?

Pasquinot. Still troubles me, devil take it!

Bergamin. Well, the marriage is arranged!

Pasquinot. What?

Bergamin. I heard everything — I was hidden in the bushes. They adore each other!

Pasquinot. Bravo!

Bergamin. We must bring matters to a head! (*He rubs his hands.*) Ha, ha! Now we can do as we had planned ——

Pasquinot. Yes, and tear down the wall.

Bergamin. And live together.

Pasquinot. Making one large estate.

Bergamin. By marrying our children. But I wonder whether they would be so anxious if they knew we wished it? A marriage arranged beforehand is not so tempting to two young children so romantic as ours. That is why we kept our own wishes a secret. I felt sure that after they had been separated — Sylvette in the convent, Percinet at school — they would thrive on their secret love. That is how I came to invent this hatred of ours. And you even doubted its success! Now all we have to do is to say Yes.

Pasquinot. But how can it be done? Remember, I've called you scoundrel, fool, idiot ——

Bergamin. Scoundrel was quite sufficient.

Pasquinot. Now, what pretext ——

Bergamin. Your daughter herself has given me an inspiration. This evening they are to meet here at eight. Percinet comes first. At the moment Sylvette appears, mysterious men in black shall emerge from the shadows and start to carry her off. An abduction! She screams, then our young hero gives chase, draws his sword; the ravishers pretend to flee; I arrive on the scene, then you — your daughter is safe and sound. You bless the couple and drop a few appropriate tears; my heart is softened. Tableau.

Pasquinot. A stroke of genius.

Bergamin (*modestly*). Yes — I think it really is. Look — see that man coming? It's Straforel, the bravo whom I sent for a few minutes ago. He is to superintend the abduction.

(STRAFOREL, *in an elaborate swordsman's costume, appears at the back of Bergamin's park, and swaggers down-stage.*)

Bergamin (*descending from the wall and bowing low to Straforel*). Allow me to introduce you to my friend Pasquinot.

Straforel (*bowing*). Monsieur! (*He raises his head and sees no Pasquinot.*)

Bergamin (*pointing to Pasquinot on the crest of the wall*). There, on the wall! — Now, my dear master, does my plan meet with your approval?

Straforel. It does. It is most simple.

Bergamin. You must act quickly, you understand?

Straforel. And say nothing!

Bergamin. A make-believe abduction and stage-fight with swords.

Straforel. I understand perfectly.

Bergamin. You must have skillful swordsmen — I can't have my boy hurt. He is my only child!

Straforel. I will see to that myself.

Bergamin. Good. In that case, I shall fear nothing.

Pasquinot (*aside to Bergamin*). Ask him the price.

Bergamin. For an abduction, Maestro, how much do you charge?

Straforel. That depends, Monsieur, on the kind you wish; we have them at all prices. In an affair of this kind, however, nothing should be spared. If I were in your place, I should have a first-class abduction.

Bergamin (*surprised*). Then you have many classes?

Straforel. Indeed I have. I have the ordinary vulgar abduction in a cab, with two men dressed in black — that's rarely used; the daylight abduction, the midnight abduction; the pompous abduction in a court carriage, with powdered servants — wigs are extra — with mutes, negroes, brigands, musketeers, anything you like! The abduction in a post-chaise, with two, three, four, five, horses, *ad lib.*; the discreet and quiet abduction, in a small carriage — that one's rather tame; the rollicking abduction, in which the victim is carried away in a sack; the romantic abduction in a boat — but a lake is necessary! — the Venetian abduction, in a gondola — too bad you have no lagoon! Moonlight abduction, or the abduction on a dark and starless night — those moonlight abductions are quite the style, though they are a little dear! — Besides these, there is the abduction by torch-

light, with cries and screams, and clash and shock of arms; the brutal abduction, the polite abduction; the classical, with masks; the gallant abduction to the accompaniment of music; but the latest, most stylish, gayest of all, is the sedan-chair abduction!

Bergamin (*scratching his head — aside to Pasquinot*). Well, what do you think?

Pasquinot. Hm, what do you think?

Bergamin. I think that we should do everything in the best possible way, no expense spared. Let us give our young romancers something they'll not soon forget. Let's have it with masks, dark mantles, torches, music, and a sedan-chair!

Straforel (*taking notes*). A first-class, then, with all the extras.

Bergamin. That's it.

Straforel. I shall return soon. (*To Pasquinot*) Remember, Monsieur, to leave open the door of your park to-night.

Bergamin. Very well, it shall be done.

Straforel (*bowing*). My compliments. (*Turning to go*) One first-class — with extras. (*He goes out.*)

Pasquinot. The honest man, he went without telling us the price!

Bergamin. Everything is arranged. Now we'll live together, after demolishing the wall.

Pasquinot. And in winter we'll have but one hearth and home!

Bergamin. Our dearest wishes are about to be realized!

Pasquinot. And we'll grow old together!

Bergamin. Dear old Pasquinot!

Pasquinot. Dear old Bergamin! (*They embrace. Sylvette and Percinet enter, from each side of the stage and see their fathers embrace.*)

Sylvette. Oh!

Bergamin (*aside to Pasquinot*). Your daughter!

Percinet. Oh!

Pasquinot (*aside to Bergamin*). Your son!

Bergamin (*aside to Pasquinot*). We must pretend to fight! (*Their embrace is transformed into a struggle.*) Rascal!

Pasquinot. Fool!

Sylvette (*pulling her father's coat-tails*). Papa!

Percinet (*doing the same with his father*). Papa!

Bergamin. Let us be!

Pasquinot. He insulted me!

Bergamin. He struck me!

Pasquinot. Coward!

Sylvette. Papa!

Bergamin. Thief!

Percinet. Papa!

Pasquinot. Bandit!

Sylvette. Papa!! (*Sylvette and Percinet finally succeed in separating the fathers.*)

Percinet (*dragging his father away*). Go in now, it's late, papa.

Bergamin (*trying to go to the wall again*). I can't control myself. Just let me —! (*Percinet takes him out.*)

Pasquinot (*also trying to return to the wall*). I'll kill him!

Sylvette (*dragging out Pasquinot*). The air is so damp! Just think of your rheumatism! (*They go out.*)

(*Little by little it grows dark. For a moment the stage is empty. Then, in Pasquinot's park, enter Straforel and swordsmen, musicians, and torch-bearers.*)

Straforel. I see one star already. The day is dying. (*He places his men about the stage.*) Stay there — you there — and you over there. The hour is near. You will see, as the clock strikes eight, a figure in white enter on this side. Then I whistle — (*He looks at the sky again.*) The moon? Splendid! Every effect is perfect. (*Examining the costumes of his band*) The capes and mantles are excellent. — You, look a little more dangerous, over there! Now, ready? (*A sedan-chair is brought in.*) The chair over there in the shade. (*Seeing the negroes who carry the chair*) The negroes are good! (*Speaking at a distance*) Torches, there, you understand you are not to come until you receive the signal? (*The faint reflection of the torches is seen at the back of the stage, through the underbrush. Enter the musicians.*) Musicians? There — at the back. Now, a little distinction and life! Vary your poses from time to time. Stand straight, mandolin! Sit down, alto! There. (*Severely to a swordsman*) You, first mask, don't look so harmless — I want a villainous slouch! Good! Now, instruments, play softly — tune up! Good — tra la la! (*He puts on his mask.*)

(*Percinet enters slowly from the other side of the stage. As he speaks the following lines, the stage becomes darker, until at the end, it is night.*)

Percinet. My father is calmer now. The day is dying, and the intoxicating odor of the elders is wafted to me;

the flowers close their petals in the gray of the evening ——

Straforel (*aside to the violins*). Music!

(*The musicians play softly until the end of the act.*)

Percinet. I tremble like a reed. She is coming!

Straforel (*to the musicians*). *Amoroso!*

Percinet. Our first evening meeting — I can scarcely stand! The evening breeze sounds like the fluttering of her dress. Now I can't see the flowers, but I can smell them. Ah, this great tree, with a star above it — Music? Who —? (*A pause*) Night has come. (*After another pause, a clock strikes eight in the distance. Sylvette appears at the back of her park.*)

Sylvette. The hour has struck. He must be waiting.

(*A whistle is heard. Straforel rises in front of Sylvette, and torch-bearers appear in the background. Sylvette screams. The swordsmen seize and put her into the sedan-chair.*)

Sylvette. Help! Help!

Percinet. Great Heavens!

Sylvette. Percinet, they are carrying me off!

Percinet (*leaping to the wall*). I come! (*When he reaches the top of the wall, he draws his sword, jumps down on the other side, and engages four or five swordsmen in combat. They flee before him.*) There, and there, and there!

Straforel (*to the musicians*). *Tremolo!*

(*The violins now play a dramatic tremolo.*)

Straforel. Per Bacco, he's the devil, that child! (*Percinet now engages Straforel in a duel. Straforel, after a few*

thrusts, puts his hand to his breast.) I — I'm mortally wounded! (*He falls.*)

Percinet (*running to Sylvette, who sits in the sedan-chair*). Sylvette! (*He kneels to her.*)

Sylvette. My savior!

Pasquinot (*entering*). Bergamin's son! Your savior? Your savior? I give you to him!

Sylvette and Percinet. Heavens!

(*Bergamin now appears on his side of the wall.*)

Pasquinot (*to Bergamin, who is seen on top of the wall*). Bergamin, your son is a hero! Let us forget our quarrels, and make these children happy!

Bergamin (*solemnly*). I hate you no more!

Percinet. Sylvette, don't speak loud: I know I am dreaming. But don't wake me!

Bergamin. Our hatred is ended in the marriage of our dear ones. (*Indicating the wall*) Henceforth let there be no Pyrenees![1]

Percinet. Who would have believed that my father could change so!

Sylvette. I told you everything would turn out happily! (*While the lovers go up-stage with Pasquinot, Straforel rises and hands a folded paper to Bergamin.*)

Bergamin. What is it? This paper — your signature? What is it, if you please?

Straforel (*bowing*). Your pardon, Monsieur, 'tis my bill! (*He falls down again as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

[1] "Il n'y a plus de Pyrénées," said Louis XIV on the departure of the Duke of Anjou from Paris to Spain.

THE KING'S ENGLISH

(A PHANTASY)

BY

HERBERT BATES

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CHARACTERS

RIPLEY O'RANNIGAN, Gentleman Adventurer, King of the Western Shores of Karra Wanga.
SOKKA WAGGA, his attendant and messenger.
LOOLA, his lovely daughter, a trifle spoiled.
KAWA KOO, the refined Cannibal King of the Eastern Shores of Karra Wanga.
WARRA GOOLA, butler to O'Rannigan.
A GUARD, serving Kawa Koo.
SILAS Q. PUDKINS, a man who makes money.
MONTMORENCY VAN RENSELAER SMYTHE, a gentleman of "class."
HARD-BOILED MIKE, "of de Gas-House Gang."
BAXTER B. BRASHLEY, "Bring-'em-in Brashley," champion salesman.
MORRIS PERLHEIMER, who "ain't got no use for Inklish."
CARLETON PURLEY PATTERBY, who never commits an error.
RICHARD WILLIS, a chap of the right sort.

The scene is the lawn of O'Rannigan's home on the tropical island of Karra Wanga (pronounce "Wang-ga"). The time is early afternoon.

THE KING'S ENGLISH

A tropical island in the South Seas. The time is the present. In the shade of a great palm (only the trunk and a few drooping leaves show) is a comfortable easy chair, draped with rich Oriental cloths. It faces toward stage left. Behind it stands the Royal Attendant, SOKKA WAGGA. *He wears native dress and not too much of it. He stands with military stiffness, but his face is impish and undignified. He is short and of amusing appearance. His walk is marked by a jerky sway from side to side. This is emphasized by his short skirt which "wags" in time with it. He holds a spear, with very broad blade.*

In the chair sits His Majesty RIPLEY O'RANNIGAN, *Gentleman Adventurer and King of the West Side of Karra Wanga. He wears a white silk skirt open at the neck, showing throat and chest, both deeply tanned. Around his waist is a blazing scarlet silk sash, very wide, the ends hanging down. He wears white trousers, neatly creased, but his feet and ankles are bare except for sandals, and are deeply tanned. His face is that of a man nearly sixty, deeply lined, with shaggy white eyebrows over deep-set eyes, giving an impression of a strong will and temper. The general cast of his features is distinctly Irish. He wears two showy rings, and in his sash is a large old-fashioned revolver.*

Upon a small table, at his left, but far enough to stage left to be clearly seen by the audience, is a small light crown.

He holds a book in his hand and is trying to read, but is

obviously very sleepy. He reads a few words, then the book falls upon his knees and his head droops to one side. This happens repeatedly; each time he awakens with a start, only to drop off again.

Ripley O'Rannigan (he speaks with a slight upper-class Irish accent. At times, to be specially indicated, this increases to a positive brogue). It's no use! A tropic island — afterr dinner — is no place to be reading Marrcus Aurrelius![1] *(He tries again, but this time he goes off altogether. The book falls to the floor with a bang, but he is too far gone to waken. His head sinks to one side. He begins to snore. Sokka Wagga tries to act as if he did not see the comedy in this, but keeps grinning and chuckling.)*

Enter (stage right) Loola. *She is a young girl, slender, graceful, and pretty, but spoiled and impulsive. She is bareheaded, with bobbed hair. Her arms and neck are bare. She is deeply tanned. Her skirt and waist are of some bright-colored stuff and she wears strings of bright beads. She wears either no stockings or stockings of bright color. About her neck she wears a wreath of flowers, South Sea fashion. She carries a ukulele, which she strums at appropriate moments, as she enters, for example. She may occasionally sing softly, almost inaudibly, in South Sea syllables.*

She comes in half skippingly, sees that her father is asleep, and stops her playing. She motions to Sokka Wagga to step aside. He does so, with primitive chuckles. She then steals up softly beside her father, picks a long blade of grass from near the chair, and tickles his left ear. Ripley

[1] Roman emperor and philosopher, 121–180.

O'Rannigan starts and violently brushes away the supposed fly. He does not sit up or open his eyes, but abruptly stops snoring, and gives a violent snort. Sokka Wagga, hand over mouth, tries to suppress his laughter, negro style. Loola repeats the same business with the right ear. Ripley strikes violently at the supposed fly and wakes himself. He sits up, rubs his eyes, yawns, looks for his book and goes through all the motions of a person aroused abruptly without realizing that he has "dropped off." An idea strikes him and he turns angrily.

Ripley. Sokka, you divvil! (*He sees Loola.*) Oh . . . it's *you!* (*His tone shows imitation of anger, not really bad temper.*) At your tricks again, is it? Can't you let your poor old father get a wink of sleep? A hard-worrking old king, and you won't even let him rest in peace after dinner! I'm ashamed of you, child!

Loola. I'm sorry, daddy . . . but I *had* to . . .

Ripley. You might have waited . . .

Loola. It was some one too important to wait . . . somebody it isn't best to keep waiting.

Ripley. They can all wait. . . . They're all heathen, anyway!

Loola. But, Father. . . . This was . . .

Ripley. Tell him to go to blazes! (*Sinks back as if to go to sleep again.*)

Loola. Father, wake up! This is somebody you've *got* to see!

Ripley. *Have to*, my child, or *must.* (*Yawns and rubs eyes.*) Not *got* to! I've told you . . .

Loola. Father . . . it's Kawa Koo!

Ripley. Kawa! . . . Our royal cannibal neighbor! What brings him to this side of the island? (*Nervously*) I hope he . . . isn't . . . *hungry!*

Loola. He said he'd got — he'd . . . he *must* see you . . . and he is a King, Daddy! So . . .

Ripley. Oh, Kawa's a decent sort of a lad, barring his unfortunate taste in cooked meat! I suppose we kings must take each other seriously, even if no one else will. I mustn't hurt the chap's feelings: he's altogether too handy with that big spear of his. All right. Let him come — wait a moment. (*He picks up the crown and tries to put it on. He gets it too much to one side.*)

Loola. Oh, Daddy! You haven't got it on straight! (*She straightens it.*) There!

Ripley. Haven't *got*. . . . *Haven't,* my child — *got* is redundant and inelegant. Did you say Kawa . . . looked angry?

Loola (*bashfully*). He . . . *smiled* . . . when he saw me.

Ripley. Oh, they *all* do that. Well, Kawa isn't so bad . . . except for this cannibalism, you know. Shockingly bad form! Never mind, Kawa ought to be well disposed to *me,* my dear. Kawa owes me a great deal.

Loola. Owes you?

Ripley. For teaching him English, my child. Yes, I did a good piece of work with Kawa.

Loola. He *does* speak it beautifully.

Ripley. Of course he does, with me teaching him. He speaks it . . . *perrfectly!* Perrfectly! Yes. Loola, I believe that Kawa is the only cannibal king in the worrld with an accent as pure as me own. And the work it was

teaching him . . . with that spear, and that ticklish temper of his. (*Shakes his head reflectively.*) It was a man's job, my child. Sokka Wagga, show King Kawa in.

Exit Sokka Wagga, wagging.

Loola. He always seemed glad to come here for his lessons. (*She says this in such a way as to make the audience understand why he was glad to come.*)

Ripley. It is too bad, too bad, that cannibalism of Kawa's. I can't see what he finds in it! It's so . . . so . . . upsetting (*He looks internally distressed.*) to think of after dinner. Oh, well! It's no business of mine to reform the man. Let the missionaries do it.

Loola. But, Daddy, it's *them* he eats.

Ripley. Them, Loola! Will you never learn! They, my child, they! Nominative, following the copulative verrb! My poor Loola, if you could but realize how such errors grate upon the ear of a man who has been expelled from the best universities of two continents.

Loola. Sh! Here comes Kawa!

Enter Sokka Wagga (stage left), advances stiffly to a position just before the chair, grounds the butt of his spear heavily, and announces in a high squeaky voice:

His Majesty Kawa Koo, King of the Eastern Shores of Karra Wanga!

Enter, immediately following, KAWA KOO. *He is a big man, heavily built. He must be tall and should, if possible, be fat. His arms and legs and chest are bare. He wears some sort of wild-beast skin, preferably tiger or leopard.* (*Sheep or goat may be used.*) *He has heavy earrings.*

(*He may wear a tight-fitting native-flesh-color jersey.*) *He wears sandals. He carries a huge spear with a broad, bright, and dangerous-looking blade. He has a dignified carriage, a rich deep voice, an ultra-refined accent, and perfect society manners. He wears a crown much heavier and bigger than O'Rannigan's.*

Kawa (*raising his spear in salute, grand opera style*). Good-day, your Majesty!

Ripley (*rising*). Good-day, *your* Majesty. (*He points to a chair which Sokka has already placed to the right of the table.*) Be seated, I beg you.

Kawa (*letting himself down a little distrustfully into the chair*). Charmed, I assure your Majesty. (*As he says this, in fact from the time of his entrance, his eyes have been fixed upon Loola and he is now absorbed in her altogether, seeing and hearing nothing else. She looks down coyly, with occasional glances at him.*)

Ripley. That was a most violent storm last night, my dear Kawa. (*Kawa is too absorbed to hear this.*)

Ripley. Almost a hurricane. . . . I was afraid our roof would go. Every palm tree on the reef was blown down. (*Kawa makes no answer.*)

Ripley. Did it do any damage upon *your* side of the island?

(*Kawa still gazes at Loola and gives a most impassioned sigh.*)

Ripley. I did not quite catch your Majesty's meaning.

Kawa (*awakening to the situation*). Oh! . . . Oh, yes. . . . Pardon me . . . my mind wandered. You were saying . . . ?

Ripley. If your Majesty had forewarned us of this visit, we should have been better prepared. . . . As it is . . . my butler . . .

Kawa. Oh, no, no, my dear fellow, don't put yourself out on my account. . . . Business, purely business, I assure you.

Ripley. Business! (*He looks puzzled and a trifle uneasy.*)

Kawa. Certainly, old chap. It's about that debt of mine. . . . You remember.

Ripley. Sorry, old man, but I can't imagine. . . .

Kawa. My payment for those lessons, you know, those lessons in English. I promised to pay . . . you recollect . . .

Ripley (*recollecting*). Oh, yes, yes. You were to pay . . . in *tourists* . . . wasn't it?

Kawa. Quite so, old chap. I was to pay you one tourist out of every ten cast ashore on my side of the island. They're always cast ashore on my side, you know!

Ripley. Don't inconvenience yourself, old chap. There's no haste.

Kawa. There hasn't been a wreck, not even a trading schooner, since we made the agreement. We've had poor picking.

Ripley. It's all right, Kawa. I can wait.

Kawa. But now . . . I've had a sort of windfall!

Loola. A windfall!

Kawa. That wind last night . . . a terrible gale. . . . Didn't you hear a gun?

Loola. A gun!

Ripley. You see, with the thunder, and the pounding of the sea . . .

Kawa (*leaning back complacently*). Well, there *was* one. On a wreck.

Loola. A wreck! Oh, how *exciting!* Oh, why didn't I *see* it!

Ripley. What was this wreck?

Kawa. A steamer, one of those big ships that carry rich tourists from America, — she was driven up just outside my lagoon.

Loola. And there were *people* on her!

Kawa. Naturally. Remember, it was upon *my* side of the island, your Majesty, — so according to our treaty, you know . . .

Loola. Did you save them *all?* Were any *lost?*

Kawa (*with grief*). Lost! Lost! Oh, my dear child, hundreds were lost . . . eaten — by *sharks* — hundreds, simply *wasted!* (*Touches his eyes with a very neat handkerchief.*)

Ripley. But surely your men saved *some.* Such swimmers as they.

Kawa. My brave boys did their best. . . . It was their loss as much as mine. . . . But it was no use. The surf ran mountain high. In spite of all we could do, hundreds got drowned.

Ripley (*lifting his hands in protest*). *Got* drowned! Oh, my dear Kawa! Don't forget what I have taught you. *Got* implies that the men by their own voluntary act . . .

Kawa. My error, your Majesty. My error! Hundreds *were* drowned! So, out of a whole shipload of . . . ahem . . . most promising material, hardly a hundred came safe to land.

Ripley. So nearly a hundred were saved.

Loola. How perfectly *splendid!*

Ripley. *Splendid* is not the word, Loola! *Splendid* signifies . . .

Loola. And where are they all?

Kawa. Well, you see . . .

Ripley. Then they were not *saved*, after all.

Kawa. Well. . . . (*Significantly*) They were not *wasted!*

Ripley. Do I understand you to mean that your majesty *killed* and *cooked* . . .

Loola. Cooked! Oh!

Kawa. You are hasty, your Majesty; these tourists, after we had saved them from the sharks, misunderstood our intentions. In fact, they offered resistance, violent resistance . . . and well . . . some of them . . . *got killed.*

Ripley. *Got* killed, your Highness. . . . *Got?*

Kawa (*sternly*). *Got*, your Majesty, *Got* killed. (*He rises, drawing himself up and thumping one big thump upon his inflated chest.*) They had the audacity to *fight me!* (*He looks distinctly dangerous. Loola shrinks away. Sokka grabs his spear.*)

Ripley (*a trifle uneasily*). Quite right, your Majesty. I . . . missed the point. *Got killed* conveys your idea perfectly. So naturally, then, those who *got* killed . . .

Kawa (*seating himself*). As I said, your Majesty, they were *not wasted!* Rich American tourists . . . (*Lays his hand meditatively upon his stomach.*) possibly just a trifle *too* rich!

Ripley. Americans! Look here, Kawa, old man. I'm a sort of American myself. I really can't have you . . .

Kawa. You don't *have* to approve, old chap. . . . We got along very nicely without.

Ripley. But I feel it my patriotic duty. I must.

Kawa. You've nothing at all to do with it. Just recall our treaty. Peace terms, Article Thirteen: "All tourists, missionaries, etc., cast upon or landing involuntarily upon ——" You know how it goes! You can't do a thing, old chap, so why disturb yourself? Of course, you can't see it as I do, but I assure you a well-fed missionary or a tender tourist . . .

Ripley. For heaven's sake, old man, don't *talk* about it. That sort of talk makes me distinctly . . . queer. And look at poor Loola. (*Loola looks decidedly upset.*)

Kawa (*to Loola*). I am sorry that I should be the cause . . .

Loola (*looking ill and offended*). I think you're *horrid!*

Ripley. We should do better to drop the subject.

Kawa. You forget, your Majesty, those lessons in English that I promised to pay for.

Ripley. Oh, yes . . . one tourist in every ten. Are there any . . . left?

Kawa. Ten, your Majesty.

Ripley. Ten! Have you brought them all?

Kawa. You mistake me, your Majesty. I said that ten *survive.* One in ten makes . . . *one* for you.

Ripley. But see here, your Majesty (*Rises.*), that isn't fair. You saved the whole hundred, you know. . . . They weren't *wasted.* You . . . you *had* them all . . . and that gives me ten.

Kawa. But they didn't survive, old chap. . . . I have *inside* information.

Ripley (*looking upset again and sitting down*). Oh, never mind. . . . Have it your own way. . . . So long as you don't *talk* about it. One will have to do. Where is he?

Kawa. Knowing that your Majesty might like to have your pick, I brought over all ten. They are with my guards, under those palms. Shall I send for them?

Ripley. Very thoughtful of your Highness. I appreciate it.

Kawa. You see, I didn't know what you wanted the chap for — messenger, or fighting man, or cook. It does make a difference. Now in this case? Which is it?

Ripley. It isn't any of those. (*Looks askance at Loola.*) Sh! Loola, my child, run over to the palace like a good girl and tell Warra Goola he is to serve tea here . . . at once. . . . We must not let his Majesty get hungry!

Loola. Very well, Father! Oh . . . Kawa . . . Are they *all men?*

Kawa. Every one.

Loola. Are any of them . . . *nice?*

Ripley. Loola!

Loola (*running off*). All right, Daddy! (*She looks towards stage left as she goes out right, trying to see the prisoners under the distant trees.*)

Ripley motions Sokka Wagga to stand back and Sokka goes to the extreme upper right.

Ripley (*confidentially*). You were asking what I want that lad for. It isn't for any of those things you named — butler or cook, you know. You see. . . . I want him . . . to marry Loola!

Kawa. Oh, your Majesty!

Ripley. The dear child is growing fast. She's getting headstrong, too much for her old father to manage. There's only one way to deal with that child. She must have a husband, a strong masterful man that she will look up to.

(*Kawa draws himself up, implying silently that* he *is such a man.*)

Ripley. Now if in your lot there happens to be a man of the right sort . . .

Kawa (*rising, deeply offended*). I had hoped, your Majesty, that *I* . . .

Ripley. Out of the question, old man, absolutely out of the question. Sorry . . . but this matter of . . . of *eating* people, you know. . . . She'd never stand it. You saw how the mere thought of it affected the poor child. She'd be upset all the time. (*Struck by a happy thought*) You couldn't, I suppose, break off the beastly habit?

Kawa. What! your Majesty! Abandon the sacred customs of my ancestors!

Ripley (*with a gesture*). Oh, of course if you feel *that* way about it! But you see how impossible it is with a child whose digestion is as sensitive as Loola's! (*He looks up, delighted at seeing an excuse for changing the subject.*) But here comes the tea. Be seated, your Majesty!

Kawa sits down rather sullenly, handling his spear ominously, but his face softens as he sees Loola, who enters close after Warra Goola and Sokka Wagga (*stage right*). WARRA GOOLA *enters wheeling a tea-wagon, Sokka attending with military stiffness. Warra Goola is a solemn person,*

blacker and more negrolike than the rest. He should look like a savage and conduct himself like a perfectly trained butler. He should wear ear- and nose-rings.

Loola seats herself and pours tea. Kawa gazes at her admiringly.

Loola (*to Kawa*). Tea, your Majesty?

Warra Goola passes it. As he hands it to each, he says "thank you" British style. Kawa eats a bread sandwich, which he bites cannibalishly.

Loola. Let me serve you another sandwich, your Majesty.

Kawa. No, thank you. I have dined . . . *most heartily!* (*Loola looks internally disturbed, sets down her cup, and fans herself with her handkerchief.*)

Ripley. Loola, darling . . .

Loola. Yes, Daddy?

Ripley. My child, I have something I must tell you . . .

Loola. Oh, Father, you sound so *serious.* (*She picks up her cup again.*)

Ripley. I *am* serious, my child, very serious. I must ask your *undivided* attention.

Loola. Oh, all right. (*Puts down cup and folds hands.*) Well . . . what is it?

Ripley. Loola (*He pauses embarrassed.*) You see, my child . . . I have long felt . . . The fact is . . . there's something I'm going to get you . . . something you've long needed!

Loola (*clapping hands*). Oh, Daddy . . . a *bow-wow?*

Ripley. No, my dear . . . a husband!

Loola (*rising*). *Daddy!* (*She looks at him and at*

Kawa in perplexity.) What *can* you mean? Is it . . . *Kawa?* (*Kawa shows much feeling.*)

Ripley. No, my dear . . . it is *not* Kawa!

(*Kawa growls something savage and inarticulate, like "Garra koorra wawlla!"*)

Loola. Well, you might tell me . . .

Ripley. It's one of these Americans, Loola, — these tourists of Kawa's . . .

Loola. Father!

Ripley. Americans are a *very* decent lot, my child. In fact I'm a *sort* of American *meself.*

Loola. What makes you think I'll like him!

Ripley. The question is whether *I* shall like him. If none of them suits me . . .

Loola. Suits *you!* It's *me* he's going to marry!

Ripley. It's *me! I*, Loola, *I*, nominative case. . . . Is that the kind of English to be spoken by the daughter of the King of Karra Wanga?

Kawa. Of the *West* side of Karra Wanga, your Majesty.

Ripley. Quite right, your Highness. It's no kind of English for you to speak, anyway.

Loola. You might let me pick him for myself.

Ripley. How can *you* pick for yourself! You do not know what you need. Your old father *does.*

Loola. Well, and who do *you* think I ought to choose?

Ripley. Who . . . for *whom!* Object of the ver-r-rb! What you need, Loola, is a husband who will see that you speak English worthy of the daughter of Ripley O'Rannigan!

Loola. You mean . . . he's to teach me . . . GRAMMAR!

Ripley. Precisely. The man I select for you, my daughter, must speak perrfect English, as perrfect as I speak meself!

Loola. Oh, Father . . . that's *impossible.*

Ripley (*flattered*). Well . . . he must come . . . reasonably near to it.

Loola. But, Father. . . . Just think . . . why . . . he might be . . . anything. He might be . . . a *schoolteacher!*

Ripley. No *matter* what he has been! You'll marry the man I select! (*Calling*) Sokka Wagga!

Sokka (*saluting*). Your Majesty?

Ripley. Your Highness, may I direct your guards to bring the prisoners before me, . . . one at a time?

Kawa (*sullenly*). As your Majesty wishes. . . . Since you prefer *them* to *me.* (*He grunts savagely and fondles his spear.*)

Ripley. Take the message to them, Sokka. And . . . you may tell them that I shall pick out the man who pleases me most in manner and in speech, in *speech*, mind! Tell them that this man shall wed my daughter and become heir to my throne and all my wealth. (*That means two big bags of pearls.*) *Exit Sokka.*

Kawa. Well . . . there'll be nine you will NOT choose! They come to *me!* (*He looks as if the idea pleased him.*)

Loola. Kawa! How can you! Oh! (*She rises as if to go out.*)

Ripley. Loola, where are you going?

Loola. I'm going to take a look at the whole bunch!

Ripley. The dear-r child. . . . She is so temperamental! (*Kawa sighs heavily and stares gloomily at the ground.*)

Ripley. I hope you will assist me with your advice, Kawa. In choosing tourists you should have excellent taste . . . er . . . I mean . . . er . . . Sit where you are, please, and we can compare impressions. I see the first candidate already.

Enter (stage left) Sokka Wagga followed by PUDKINS, *who is followed by* GUARD (*with a large spear*). *Sokka marches ahead, halts solemnly before the chair, grounds his spear, and announces:*

Mr. Silas Q. Pudkins, of Pudkinsville.

(*Pudkins is a tall lean man, about forty, of any American type appropriate to the locality where the play is produced. He speaks with a nasal drawl. He is expensively dressed and conceitedly at ease.*)

Pudkins (*advancing with ungainly self-complacency*). Well, well. (*He drawls out "well" so that it rhymes with "gal".*) All the comforts of civil-ize-ation! Glad tuh meet yuh, King. Have a see-gar! (*Takes one from his pocket and sees Kawa.*) Gee Whizz! If it ain't a *pair* of *kings!* (*Passes cigars to both.*) If that doan't beat the band!

Ripley (*rather coldly*). You know why I sent for you, Mr. Pudkins?

Pudkins. Shure. George there told me. Well, I guess I'm what you're looking for!

Ripley. What makes you "guess" that?

Pudkins. I'm the sort of feller that fills bills. Yeah. Self-made and done a good job. Built up the biggest factory in Pudkinsville. You ask the folks there about me! They'll tell you that I'm the goods.

Ripley. Rich, I suppose?

Pudkins. Say, King, if I had one foot of bridge for every dollar I've got workin' for me in the U.S., why I could *walk* every step of the way back to God's country. An' I done it all myself.

Ripley. You know . . . Mr. Pudkins . . . you don't speak English very well.

Pudkins. Get my meanin', doncha? Whatmoreju want?

Ripley. Ever try . . . education?

Pudkins. Edjication! Edjication don't get a man nowheres. I put my money into things that count!

Ripley. Such as . . . that *scarfpin?*

Pudkins. That pin tells folks I've *got there.* Money talks.

Ripley. I don't like the way you talk.

Pudkins. I talk like a plain American.

Ripley. Lincoln was a plain American. He didn't talk like that. And *he* didn't put dollars before education.

Pudkins. Say, I jest talk natural, the way God made me!

Ripley. The Almighty gave you a nose, but he didn't mean you to talk through it.

Pudkins. I'll talk jest ez I goldarn please!

Ripley. You may, for all I care. He goes to you, Kawa! He's useless for my purpose.

(*Exit Pudkins, stage left, with Sokka and Guard. Re-enter Loola excited, stage left.*)

Kawa. H'm. He's none too good for *mine.*

Loola. Oh, Daddy, Daddy! The *loveliest* young man.

Ripley. Loola!

Loola (*casting her eyes down*). He's got . . . the *darlingest eyes.*

Ripley. Remember, child . . . *I* am to decide.

Loola. But Daddy . . . he . . . *smiled* at me. *Please,* Daddy!

Ripley. Loola, sit down and be quiet.

Loola (*half to herself*). If he isn't the one, I don't want . . . *anybody.* (*Kawa looks at her in an injured way. He rises and looks over to the far right where the prisoners are supposed to be and hefts his spear meditatively.*)

Ripley. Here comes another lad. This one is "different."

Kawa (*resuming his seat*). He assuredly *is.* (*Enter Sokka, stage left.*)

Sokka (*announcing as before*). Montmorency Van Renselaer Smythe (*Rhyme with "blithe."*), Esquire, of Riverside Drive.

Smythe *followed by Guard, advances in his best manner, left. He is not pompous, merely wearily superior. He speaks with an affected Anglo-American accent. He is dressed in English tweeds, and carries and intermittently uses a monocle. He lounges rather than walks.*

Smythe. Bah Jove . . . really, really you know! Just fawncy this . . . on this blighted island! Who'd have thought it! Rippin', simply rippin'. Oh, pahdon

. . . me cahd! (*He languidly gets out a cardcase, then a card, which he passes to Sokka. Sokka turns it on all sides, smells it, tastes it, and at last, at a gesture from Loola, passes it to her.*)

Smythe. I nevah dreamed, you know, that persons of any . . . *clawss* . . .

Ripley. You know why I asked you here, Mr. Smythe?

Smythe. Oh, rawthuh. But . . . unless the young woman is . . . attractive . . . and of the right sawt . . .

Ripley (*pointing to Loola*). *This* is my daughter. (*Loola looks down coquettishly.*)

Smythe (*raising monocle and almost shuddering*). Oh, deah, deah. Really, I say! Still she is rawthuh pretty, old man! Perhaps a month or so in London . . .

Ripley. Do you always talk like that, Mr. . . . Smith?

Smythe. Smythe, old thing . . . Smythe . . . like *that!*

Ripley. I'll wager your father was a Smith from Smithville. You never talked like that when you played marbles. You never came from England . . . if your accent *did*.

Smythe. Oh, I'm not English, old chap, though people always *think* I am, you know. I'm American through and through. . . . Cottage at Newport. . . . Bungalow at Palm Beach.

Ripley. Still . . . that accent of yours! Is *that* from Palm Beach?

Smythe. Quite so, old deah. Different clawsses, you know, talk differently. Now in *my* clawss. . . . Well, *we* talk like *this*.

Ripley. About time you got over it. You don't talk like anything that belongs on God's earth. You're not a good American or an honest Englishman, you've got the merits of naythe and the faults of both!

Smythe. You are blawsted rude, old chap. And really (*Puts up his monocle at Loola.*) that extraordinary young person . . . (*Loola makes a slight face, not coarsely, but clearly showing contempt and indignation.*)

Ripley. Take him, your Majesty. He'll give your stew a rich "clawssy" flavor.

Kawa. He's a bit hard to swallow, your Majesty. Perhaps a little English ale . . .

Ripley. Try 'alf and 'alf. That suits him better.

(*The Guard leads Smythe off, left, Sokka accompanying.*)

Ripley. I hope they're not all like that!

Loola. You wait till you see *mine.*

Ripley. Here comes another . . . perhaps he is yours. (*Loola rises and looks eagerly. Then she makes a face and sits down.*)

Enter MIKE, *left, followed breathlessly by Sokka and the Guard. Mike is big, heavy set, and "dead-tough." He walks with a swagger, carries an unlighted cigar in one side of his mouth, dresses loudly, and acts and talks accordingly.*

Sokka (*frantically prodding at him with his spear, seconded by the Guard*). Name! Name!

Mike (*turning savagely*). Can dat! Cut it out! (*To Ripley*) Say, youse. What am I up against in diss dump, anyways? (*Turning again to Sokka*) Hay! Ring off dat funny business. Wheredja git dat stuff!

Say. . . . Quit yuh shovin'. Tink dis is de subway! (*To Ripley*) Say, is youse de boss . . . or is it dat gink?

Ripley. I'm the man you are looking for, my lad.

Mike. Say. You look like you'd busted loose from a movie lot. And de fat guy. He's some boid! (*Turning to Sokka*) Say dere . . . quit yuh proddin'! You get my Nannie. (*Sees Loola.*) Who's de skoit? Some chicken. . . . I'll say so.

Ripley. Really, young man . . . the way you talk . . .

Mike. Is dat de kid goes wid de job? If she is, I'll say right out loud . . .

Ripley. Just a moment. Mr. . . . ?

Mike. No "Mister" in mine. Plain Mike. Hard-boiled Mike of de Gas-House Gang. Dat's my monniker.

Ripley. And this . . . language you speak?

Mike. Language. I don't speak no *language.* I talk plain talk. An' any guy wot don't like it, he can go to . . .

Ripley. Didn't you ever go to school?

Mike. None o' yuh business. (*Sokka and the Guard both jab him.*) Ouch! Sure I did . . . once. Dat wuz enough. De old dame at de desk she looked at me like dis (*imitation of elderly and indignant teacher*) an' she sez, "Li'll boy, yore grammar's bad!" "De Hill it is," sez I. . . . An', I butted her in de stummick an' come away. Dat's school enough for me!

Ripley. So you never got an education. . . . Well . . . I suppose you were poor!

Mike. Poor. . . . Me! (*Pulls out a huge roll.*) Look at dat! Hard-boiled Mike never had *his* pockets empty. Blow it in on eddication? Nix. I seen what

it was an' I cut it out. De guy dat gets de goods in diss world is de guy dat's TOUGH. Dat's *me!*

Ripley. See that he "gets the goods," your Majesty.

Kawa. I'm afraid, old chap . . . he's too . . . tough.

Ripley. Try boiling . . . over a slow fire.

(*Sokka and the Guard approach Mike.*)

Mike (*to Ripley*). Say, what yuh givin' us. . . . Tryin' tuh *kid* me! (*Sokka and the Guard jab him with their spears.*)

Mike. OUCH! Ouch! (*Exit, left, followed by Sokka and the Guard.*)

Ripley. That lad's masterful enough.

Kawa (*meditatively*). I may find a use for that chap in my army.

Loola. Perhaps he'll come this time. (*Rises and looks.*)

Ripley. So that wasn't he . . .?

Loola. Oh . . . there's . . . no . . . it *isn't.* (*Sits down again.*)

Kawa. This chap can't wait to be announced. (*Sokka, left, rushes in just ahead of the next man and breathlessly announces.*) Mr. Baxter B. Brashley, champion salesman.

(BRASHLEY *is loudly overdressed, and has a beaming smile. His manner is fresh and vulgar and offensively good-natured.*)

Brashley. Good morning! And how is your Majesty? Oh . . . my mistake. . . . How are *both* your Majesties? How are we feeling this beautiful May morning? And the little lady? (*Half aside*) Some peacherino, *I'll* tell the world. Making those goo-goo glances at me

already! (*Winks and throws a kiss. Loola tosses her head indignantly.*)

Ripley. You seem very — cheerful, Mr. Brashley.

Brash. Cheerful? That's my middle name. The Pollyanna salesman, happy anywhere! My slogan, gentlemen! That is why I'm just the man you're looking for.

Ripley. Are you?

Brash. You can't do without me. . . . Listen, I'm a salesman. . . . Now I'll sell *myself!* You'll *have* to take me. . . . Never fail. That's my slogan. You can't do without me.

Ripley. I might try it.

Brash. It can't be done. Look at this island. What does it need? Pep, sir, and jazz. Now I'll put them into it. That's *me*. . . . I'll take this place and in one year . . . one little year . . . I'll make it as famous as Atlantic City. Do you get me?

Ripley. I don't care to "get you," Mr. Brashley. You won't do.

Brash. I . . . won't do! Say, *look here!* I never walk out till I've made a sale and I'm not going to break my record now. No, sir! I'm "Bring-'em-in Brashley," and I stick till I sell my goods. See here, girlie. . . . Take a good look at me! (*Loola turns up her nose and looks the other way.*) They all fall for me.

Ripley. What an extraordinary language! Is it supposed to be English?

Brash. English? Nope. I talk United States. It's good enough for me.

Ripley. It may be good enough — for *you*. That

stuff you talk isn't good enough for me . . . or for the United States either!

Brash. It's straight American!

Ripley. Nothing of the sort. It's vaudeville and comics and the cheapest kind of musical comedy. It's the shoddiest language spoken.

Brash. Well . . . it's up to date, ain't it?

Ripley. It's fresh, if that's what you mean. So are you! We don't want you, Mr. Brashley.

Brash. You can't get rid of me like that. You can't shake me, I tell you. You can't shake me! . . .

Ripley (*rising abruptly*). The divvil I can't! . . . We'll see! (*He grabs him by both shoulders, shakes him furiously, and keeping hold of his shoulders, kicks him along into the hands of the Guard and Sokka, who seize him and hustle him out, left.*)

Ripley (*rubbing his hands*). Can't shake him, can I?

Kawa. Well kicked, old chap!

Ripley. Loola, you've had a narrow escape. . . .

Loola. It's lucky he didn't get any fresher with *me!*

Ripley. Loola! I'm astonished. . . . Such language . . .

Loola (*rises and looks expectantly*). Oh, bother! (*Sits again. A sound of loud Yiddish talk in the distance*)

Kawa. What a noise some one is making! (*Enter left, Sokka, beside* MORRIS PERLHEIMER, *who is talking to him with both hands. The Guard keeps at a respectful distance. Perlheimer is not the conventional low-comedy Jew. He is rather overdressed and speaks with a very foreign accent. He is not tall.*)

Sokka (*announcing as usual*). Mr. Morris Perlheimer.

Perl. Vell, Mr. Kink, and here I vas. Shust de feller vot you vas lookink after, aind ut? May be you get a good man of pizness by the island and things go different already. Understant? (*Rubs his hands together.*)

Ripley. What makes you talk like that?

Perl. Vell . . . how is it a man ought to talk when he speaks Yiddish by his house?

Ripley. Why not speak English?

Perl. Inklish? Vat for I speak Inklish? I read Yiddische papers. I talk Yiddish mit mein friends. I live by mein own people!

Ripley. Your own people? Aren't they Americans?

Perl. Not Americans vot speak Inklish. Inklish aind my lankwitch. I speak *Yiddish.*

Ripley. You're a poor sort of American!

Perl. Vell, maybe I vasn't de only vun!

Ripley. Perhaps not . . . but you're one too many.

Perl. Say, don'd you insult mein people!

Ripley. I'm not talking about your people. I don't care about your race. That's *your* look-out. I'm talking about you hyphenated foreign-newspaper people. I don't care whether you are Jews or Italians or Irish or Swedes or Arabs. The man that comes into a country to live owes it to that country to learn its language and to read its papers!

Perl. I tell you . . . us Jews . . .

Ripley. Stop it, Perlheimer. . . . Jews make as good Americans as any that ever came over the Atlantic. . . . Why can't you be like Nathan Straus[1] and men of his sort? Come out of your colony and mix in with us. . . . If

[1] Distinguished New York merchant and philanthropist.

all the Italians and Greeks and the rest of you would speak English in your homes and read English papers, America would grow as she has never grown. Try it.

Perlheimer. I keep by mein own ways. I tell you de Yiddische lankwitch vas . . .

Ripley. You may have him, Kawa. America doesn't want him. He's *indigestible!*

Kawa (*alarmed*). Indigestible! Oh, I say, your Majesty!

Ripley. One life-saver an hour after eating, your Highness!

(*Sokka leads out Perlheimer, left, still talking with both hands.*)

Ripley. There are thousands of Jews and foreigners of all kinds who have done what he hasn't.

Loola. Maybe the man's poor, Daddy, and can't help it!

Ripley. Did you see the rings on him? No. He's like Pudkins and Brashley and Smythe — all alike — too lazy or conceited to come in with the rest! If he was really poor and never had a chance, that is different. I'd be sorry for the lad! I'd never let Kawa have him.

Kawa. Our agreement, your Majesty. . . . Only one!

Ripley. We haven't found one of that sort yet. I suppose Loola'd have to marry him!

Loola. I'm going to marry Dick!

Ripley. Dick!

Loola. The one with the lovely eyes! And, oh, Daddy . . . the wonderfullest voice!

Ripley. Loola, your grammar! *Wonderfullest.* Good heavens! It's worse than Yiddish! And where did you

ever hear his voice? And his name? How did you learn that?

Loola (*with breezy naïveté*). Oh, out there. (*Points under the trees.*) I bribed Sokka with chewing gum. We had a *lovely* talk! Oh, he's *grand!*

Ripley. Good heavens! *What* are children coming to? Is this your "Dick" that's coming now?

Loola. Oh, let me see! (*Disgusted*) No! That . . . Dick? Good *Lord!*

Ripley. Loola!

Kawa (*sees who is coming*). I *say*, your Majesty!

Sokka (*enters, left, announcing as usual*). Professor Carleton Purley Patterby!

(*Enter* PATTERBY. *He is dressed most properly, though his clothing is slightly crumpled by the storm. He is continually fussing over trifling marks of disorder, brushing and pinching and straightening fastidiously. He is an exemplary-looking young man with an air of trained restraint. He wears eyeglasses with wide rims and with a very wide black ribbon. His speech is superior. His enunciation is painfully correct. He stands in superior silence. The Guard keeps his distance. Loola titters. He looks at her as a teacher might.*)

Ripley. Well, Mr. Patterby . . .

Patterby. Professor Patterby, your Majesty!

Ripley. Professor Patterby. And what is it that you . . . profess?

Patterby. I instruct, sir, the young ladies of a select female seminary in belles-lettres and orthoëpy. You apprehend me?

Ripley. Perfectly, young man. I have, in fact, taught orthoëpy myself. This (*He points to Kawa.*) is my pupil. Professor Patterby . . . His Majesty, Kawa Koo! (*Both bow politely. Patterby stares in a very superior way at Kawa's costume and Kawa tries to outdo Patterby in icy superciliousness.*)

Patterby. I believe that your Majesty wishes my professional services. . . .

Ripley. Perhaps. . . . Tell me, Professor Patterby . . . do you always speak correctly?

Patterby. I *teach* correct speech, your Majesty.

Ripley. Yes, I know *that.* But do you always get things right *yourself?*

Patterby (*in a very superior way*). Invariably, your Majesty.

Ripley. But don't you ever, just now and then, you know, pronounce a word *wrong?*

Patterby. "Wrongly" is more accurate, your Majesty. (*Ripley looks furious. Loola snickers. Kawa looks amused.*) No, I make *no* mistakes.

Ripley. But a man can't always be sure!

Patterby. I can.

Ripley. How can you?

Patterby (*from an eminence*). Really . . . it's absurdly simple. I merely pronounce every word as the dictionary directs.

Ripley. But there are so many dictionaries. . . .

Patterby. I know *all* the dictionaries by heart. Consequently, I am *invariably right!*

Ripley. Invariably right! That must be a delightful feeling!

"You mane ut sounded Irish!"

Patterby (*blandly*). It *is*.

Ripley. Loola, my child. This young man never makes a single mistake. Now, under his instruction, my dear . . .

Loola. Oh, Daddy! You're not going . . . to marry me . . . to THAT!

Patterby. Really, your Majesty . . . this young person . . .

Loola. Oh. . . . He's *terrible!*

Patterby. I gravely fear lest demoralizing tropical influences . . .

Loola. Father! He isn't human! His mother was a grammar and his father was a dictionary! If you make me marry him, I'll BITE him! (*Patterby starts back, raising both hands in alarm and horror.*)

Ripley. But, Loola. . . . Think, child. This man can make you the finest speaker in the whole wide worrrld!

Patterby (*looking startled*). Oh. . . . Your Majesty! A crude error!

Ripley (*getting aroused and more Irish*). Do you mean that *I* made a "crrude errorrr"?

Patterby. In all the "*worrruld*"! The "*worrruld*"!

Ripley (*dangerously*). Well . . . and what was the matter with it?

Patterby. It sounded, your Majesty, distinctly . . . *Hibernian!*

Ripley (*very angry and Irish*). You mane ut sounded *Irish!*

Patterby. To be accurate — yes!

Ripley (*springing to his feet*). Verry loike ut *did!* It's Irish I am, annyway! But I'll have ye know that I spake perrfect English, and anny blatherskite . . .

Loola. Father. Father! (*She tries to quiet him, though clearly delighted that Patterby has lost favor.*)

Kawa. I say, old man, go easy!

Ripley (*controlling himself with difficulty and relapsing into his chair*). You're a wonderful speaker, my lad. In fact, you're perrfect, — too perrfect for this wicked worruld. It's no place for you! Take him, Kawa! (*Exploding into violent anger again*) Take him QUICK! (*Sokka and the Guard take hold of him.*)

Patterby. Your low brogue, combined with your offensive personality and the vulgarity of this young person (*looking at Loola*) make me . . .

Ripley. Get him away before I KILL him! (*Sokka and the Guard remove Patterby.*)

Kawa. What can I do with that sort of thing?

Ripley. Possibly . . . in the salad! "Low brogue," is it? (*Savagely*) Make hamburger of him!

Kawa. Really, your Majesty, when you compare those chaps with *me.* Doesn't it strike you . . .

Ripley. It doesn't. You don't come into it, old chap — that's all!

Kawa. Puritanic prejudice!

Loola (*who has risen and looked off to the right, clapping her hands excitedly*). Oh, Father, Father!

Ripley. What ails the child?

Loola. Oh, Daddy! It's HIM!

Ripley. HIM! Use the right case, child! And who is HIM?

Loola. Daddy, it's DICK!

Ripley. Oh, that's it. (*Kawa looks angrily and jealously toward the right.*)

Enter Sokka as usual, left, announcing, "Mr. Richard Willis of New York."

(*Enter* WILLIS, *a good-looking, bright, prepossessing young man. He is well but not* too *well dressed. He speaks with a good accent but not with exaggerated correctness. Guard follows.*)

Ripley. Come here, young man. (*Willis steps forward.*)

Loola. Oh, Daddy. Isn't he *splendid!* (*She smiles at him. Willis smiles at her. She starts forward.*)

Ripley. Stand behind my chair, Loola! (*She pouts and obeys.*)

Ripley. Young man, you have made a favorable impression upon my daughter.

Willis. Why — I hope, sir . . .

Ripley. Can you make a favorable impression upon ME! (*His manner implies it will be hard to do.*)

Willis. I hope I can, sir. You know I think your daughter here's the — the — most . . . (*He hesitates in embarrassment.*)

Ripley. Never mind my daughter!

Loola. Father!

Ripley. My girrl must marry a man who can speak English right and can make her do the same. Are you the man to do it?

Loola. Daddy. . . . I'll *let* him *make* me!

Ripley. Do you speak good English?

Willis. Why, I hope I do.

Ripley. Divvil take what you hope! *Do* you?

Willis. I suppose I get a lot of things wrong. Still I do my best.

Ripley (*severely*). You admit, then, young man, you make *mistakes?*

Loola (*alarmed and grasping Ripley's arm*). Oh, father, please!

Willis. Of course I do. Don't *you?*

Ripley (*his expression relaxes into a smile*). Do I? Young man, I *do* . . . and so does every decent man on God's green earth! (*Holds out his hand. Willis and he shake hands.*) The thing, my lad, isn't to make no mistakes. The fellow that says he does not is either a liar or a — a *Patterby!* The trick is to make as few as you can.

Willis. You're right, sir.

Ripley. The lad talks sense, Loola. Now answer me. . . . Do you use *slang?*

Willis. Well, now and then.

Ripley. And do you *know* it's slang when you use it? (*He assumes his inquisitorial tone again.*) You use it deliberately — with malice aforethought?

Loola. Oh, Daddy, don't.

Willis. Why, sir. That's the fun of it — *knowing* that it *is* slang.

Ripley. That's where you're right, my boy. Any man that's got blood in him likes to sprinkle his speech with a pinch of slang. But some of these fellows talk nothing but slang. It's their only language. And where's the fun in that! There's no fun using it unless you know it and say it with a laugh. But don't you carry it too far — or let this girrl do it.

Willis. I'll try, sir.

Ripley. The child's adjectives — can you believe it? She said your eyes were *grand* and your voice was *lovely!*

(*Loola covers her face with her hands, but peeps out.*) Well, after you've been married awhile she'll learn better! Take her, my lad. The job's too much for me!

Willis. I'll do my best, sir, but — Good Lord! (*At the cue "Take her," Kawa rises and begins to prowl the stage with a savage, stealthy walk, a combination of the step of an American Indian and the pace of a classic dancer. He holds his spear horizontally and moves it savagely in time with his step. He murmurs savage syllables to himself. See those below.*)

Loola. Father. . . . Look at Kawa!

Willis. Good Heavens, sir. What is it?

Ripley. Kawa, I say, old chap, what ails your Majesty? (*Kawa does not hear. He increases the violence of his dance and begins a barbarous chant, not loudly at first, but savagely, gradually working himself up, keeping time with his dance.*)

Kawa. Bamma Lamma. Bamma Lamma. Boosha, Goola. BROOF! (*Repeat. He gives a nasty look at Willis and handles his spear wickedly.*)

Loola (*rushes over to Willis*). Oh, Dick, Dick. What is it?

(*Willis puts his arm about her. She clings to him excitedly. Kawa repeats his chant, coming nearer and looking at Willis more threateningly. His voice is louder.*)

Loola. Oh, Dick. He's *jealous!* Oh! What shall I do! He'll — he'll EAT you!

Ripley (*coming forward and snapping his fingers*). Come out of it, old man. Snap out of it! Sokka, call the Guard! (*Sokka goes out, left.*)

Kawa (*advancing upon Willis and raising his spear threateningly*). Kasha Boosha! Kasha Boosha! Karra! Karoop! KarOOK!

Ripley. Grreat Heaven! All my teaching rruined!

Loola. Father! What ails him?

Ripley. It's terrible, child. Terrible. He has *reverted to savagery!*

Loola. I never knew they did it like *that!*

Kawa (*rising to a climax*). Masah Gasha. Kasha Gasha. KaRoob! KarRASH! GAROOMP!! (*He raises his spear as if to hurl it at Willis.*)

Loola. Oh, Daddy, *save* him! (*She throws herself in front of Willis. Willis steps quickly over to Ripley, snatches the revolver from his sash and points it at Kawa.*)

Willis. Steady, your Highness, steady! Drop that spear! (*More forcibly but not much louder*) Drop it! (*Kawa drops it to the ground.*) That's right. Now . . . hands up! Higher. . . . Higher. . . . Higher still! Hold that pose, please. I can't say you . . . look pleasant.

Kawa (*slightly recovering his self-possession*). I hope you don't intend to . . . press the button! (*Sokka re-enters, left. He is chewing gum.*)

Willis. Not if you behave yourself. (*To Ripley*) Will your Majesty kindly remove his spear? (*Ripley picks it up and hands it to Sokka.*) Thank you. (*To Kawa*) No. As you were, please! (*Loud shouts off-stage, left*) Hallo! . . . What's that?

Ripley. Sokka . . . where is my guard? What is going on there? Why haven't you fetched them? Where are they?

Sokka (*chewing hard and saluting*). Fightin', y'r Majesty.

Ripley. Fighting? . . . Fighting *what?* Hurry, you idiot!

Sokka (*pointing to Kawa*). Fightin' *his* men. To get prisoner men. Want them . . . for *kai-kai*. . . . (*Rubs stomach and smiles.*)

Kawa. Fighting my men! I say. Let me go!

Willis. Steady, please.

Ripley. Sokka, run at once. See who is winning. His men are the stronger, I am afraid. (*Exit Sokka, left.*)

Kawa. Your chaps haven't a chance. Sorry, old man, but you've broken the treaty. . . .

Willis. You won't break *this* treaty (*leveling the revolver*).

(*The yells now increase, dividing into yells of triumph and yells of terror.*)

(*Re-enter Sokka, left, running.*)

Sokka. They've won! (*He still chews gum, and speaks in off-hand manner.*)

Ripley and Kawa. *Who've* won?

Sokka (*nodding at Kawa*). His! We're licked. Bimeby . . .

Kawa (*to Willis*). Better drop that gun, old man. If you shoot me, it'll be slow torture with boiling oil. Otherwise . . .

Ripley. Otherwise? (*Willis lowers the revolver.*)

Kawa. Oh, just the usual thing. A dinner to celebrate the victory!

Willis. And we . . .

Kawa. You attend it . . . in the kettle!

Willis. Not while I've got this gun.

Ripley. Not a chance, my boy. I'm afraid we're as good as cooked. Poor Loola. . . . It always upsets her so!

Kawa. *Oh, Loola?* Oh, in *her* case . . .

(*A heavy report is heard off-stage at left.*)

Kawa. What is that?

Ripley. It sounds like a ship's gun!

Kawa. Another wreck!

Loola (*looking over towards left*). No! It isn't a wreck! Oh, Dick, it's a *ship* — a big shiny ship. It's a WARSHIP. She's close to the beach!

Kawa. What's she doing here?

Loola. She's lowering a boat, lots of boats. Oh . . .

Ripley. *Willis.* } What is it?

Loola. I see her flag. Oh, Daddy!

Ripley. Can you make it out?

Loola. It's the American flag. . . . Oh, Daddy, we're *saved!*

Kawa. What are they doing on *my* island!

Ripley. You can't fight the American navy, old man. Better give in gracefully.

Kawa. But my prisoners?

Ripley. I'm afraid Uncle Sam will interfere.

Kawa. Snatching a man's food from his mouth! Never mind! (*Piously*) Heaven will send more!

Ripley. Well, I am glad to see the old flag, for one. (*Takes off his crown.*) I've had enough of this. (*Lays*

it upon the table.) Kawa, you can be king of both beaches, for all I care. I'm done with it.

Loola. Father! What do you mean?

Ripley. I'm done with cannibal islanding. We're going back to America. It's time for you to see Niagara and Grant's Tomb and the Subway.

Loola. And Dick?

Ripley. I suppose Dick will follow along. They generally do.

Kawa. And *me*, your Majesty?

Ripley. *I*, Kawa, *I*. Don't let your English fall off, old chap. Read Addison and Macaulay — after every meal. Sokka, run to the bungalow and get my grip and those bags of pearls. (*Exit Sokka, right.*) Loola, pack your clothes!

Loola. They're *on* me, Daddy!

Ripley. We'll buy more in New York.

Loola. Oh, Dick . . . a wedding journey for you and I.

Ripley. For *I!* For *I!* Young man, see that that girrl studies grammar one hour every day.

Willis. Yes, your Majesty. (*They start towards each other. The curtain falls.*)

(*At the second rising of the curtain Ripley carries a bundle tied up in red cloth. Sokka carries a huge unabridged dictionary and two netted bags of moth-balls. Loola and Willis have just separated after a kiss and are preparing for another when the curtain falls.*)

THE LOST SILK HAT

BY

LORD DUNSANY

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PERSONS

THE CALLER
THE LABORER
THE CLERK
THE POET
THE POLICEMAN

SCENE: A Fashionable London Street

THE LOST SILK HAT

The CALLER *stands on a doorstep, "faultlessly dressed," but without a hat. At first he shows despair, then a new thought engrosses him.*

Enter the LABORER.

The Caller. Excuse me a moment. Excuse me — but — I'd be greatly obliged to you if — if you could see your way — in fact, you can be of great service to me if —

The Laborer. Glad to do what I can, sir.

Caller. Well, all I really want you to do is just to ring that bell and go up and say — er — say that you've come to see to the drains, or anything like that, you know, and get hold of my hat for me.

Laborer. Get hold of your 'at!

Caller. Yes. You see, I left my hat behind, most unfortunately. It's in the drawing-room (*Points to window.*), that room there, half under the long sofa, the far end from the door. And if you could possibly go and get it, why, I'd be (*The Laborer's expression changes.*) — Why, what's the matter?

Laborer (*firmly*). I don't like this job.

Caller. Don't like this job! But my dear fellow, don't be silly, what possible harm —?

Laborer. Ah-h. That's what I don't know.

Caller. But what harm can there possibly be in so simple a request? What harm does there seem to be?

Laborer. Oh, it seems all right.

Caller. *Well*, then.

Laborer. All these crack jobs do seem all right.

Caller. But I'm not asking you to rob the house.

Laborer. Don't seem as if you are, certainly, but I don't like the looks of it; what if there's things what I can't 'elp taking when I gets inside?

Caller. I only want my hat — Here, I say, please don't go away — here's a sovereign, it will only take you a minute.

Laborer. *What I want to know* —

Caller. Yes?

Laborer. — Is what's *in* that hat?

Caller. What's *in* the hat?

Laborer. Yes; that's what I want to know.

Caller. What's *in* the hat?

Laborer. Yes, you aren't going to give me a sovereign —?

Caller. I'll give you two sovereigns.

Laborer. You aren't going to give me a sovereign, and rise it to two sovereigns, for an *empty* hat?

Caller. But I must have my hat. I can't be seen in the streets like this. There's nothing *in* the hat. What do you think's in the hat?

Laborer. Ah, I'm not clever enough to say that, but it looks as if the papers was in that hat.

Caller. The papers?

Laborer. Yes, papers proving, if you can get them, that you're the heir to that big house, and some poor innocent will be defrauded.

Caller. Look here, the hat's absolutely empty. I

must have my hat. If there's anything in it you shall have it yourself as well as the two pounds, only get me my hat.

Laborer. Well, that seems all right.

Caller. That's right, then you'll run up and get it?

Laborer. Seems all right to me and seems all right to you. But it's the police what you and I have got to think of. Will it seem all right to them?

Caller. Oh, for heaven's sake —

Laborer. Ah!

Caller. What a hopeless fool you are.

Laborer. Ah!

Caller. Look here.

Laborer. Ah, I got you there, mister.

Caller. Look here, for goodness' sake don't go.

Laborer. Ah! (*Exit.*)

(*Enter the* CLERK.)

Caller. Excuse me, sir. Excuse my asking you, but, as you see, I am without a hat. I shall be extraordinarily obliged to you if you would be so very good as to get it for me. Pretend you have come to wind the clocks, you know. I left it in the drawing-room of this house, half under the long sofa, the far end.

Clerk. Oh, er — all right, only —

Caller. Thanks so much, I am immensely indebted to you. Just say you've come to wind the clocks, you know.

Clerk. I — er — don't think I'm very good at winding clocks, you know.

Caller. Oh, that's all right, just stand in front of the

clock and fool about with it. That's all they ever do. I must warn you there's a lady in the room.

Clerk. Oh!

Caller. But that's all right, you know. Just walk past up to the clock.

Clerk. But I think, if you don't mind, as there's someone there —

Caller. Oh, but she's quite young and very, very beautiful and —

Clerk. Why don't you get it yourself?

Caller. That is impossible.

Clerk. Impossible?

Caller. Yes, I have sprained my ankle.

Clerk. Oh! Is it bad?

Caller. Yes, very bad indeed.

Clerk. I don't mind trying to carry you up.

Caller. No, that would be worse. My foot has to be kept on the ground.

Clerk. But how will you get home?

Caller. I can walk all right on the flat.

Clerk. I'm afraid I have to be going on. It's rather later than I thought.

Caller. But for goodness' sake don't leave me. You can't leave me here like this without a hat.

Clerk. I'm afraid I must, it's later than I thought. (*Exit.*)

(*Enter the* POET.)

Caller. Excuse me, sir. Excuse my stopping you. But I should be immensely obliged to you if you would do me a very great favor. I have unfortunately left my hat behind while calling at this house. It is half under the

long sofa, at the far end. If you could possibly be so kind as to pretend you have come to tune the piano and fetch my hat for me I should be enormously grateful to you.

Poet. But why cannot you get it for yourself?

Caller. I cannot.

Poet. If you would tell me the reason perhaps I could help you.

Caller. I cannot. I can never enter that house again.

Poet. If you have committed a murder, by all means tell me. I am not sufficiently interested in ethics to wish to have you hanged for it.

Caller. Do I look like a murderer?

Poet. No, of course not. I am only saying that you can safely trust me, for not only does the statute book and its penalties rather tend to bore me, but murder itself has always had a certain fascination for me. I write delicate and fastidious lyrics, yet, strange as it may appear, I read every murder trial, and my sympathies are always with the prisoner.

Caller. But I tell you I am not a murderer.

Poet. Then what have you done?

Caller. I have quarreled with a lady in that house and have sworn to join the Bosnians and die in Africa.

Poet. But this is beautiful.

Caller. Unfortunately I forgot my hat.

Poet. You go to die for a hopeless love, and in a far country; it was the wont of the troubadours.

Caller. But you will get my hat for me?

Poet. That I will gladly do for you. But we must find an adequate reason for entering the house.

Caller. You pretend to tune the piano.

Poet. That, unfortunately, is impossible. The sound of a piano being unskillfully handled is to me what the continual drop of cold water on the same part of the head is said to be in countries where that interesting torture is practiced. There is —

Caller. But what are we to do?

Poet. There is a house where kind friends of mine have given me that security and comfort that are a poet's necessity. But there was a governess there and a piano. It is years and years since I was able even to see the faces of those friends without an inward shudder.

Caller. Well, we'll have to think of something else.

Poet. You are bringing back to these unhappy days the romance of an age of which the ballads tell.

Caller. Yes, but you know first of all I must get my *hat.*

Poet. But why?

Caller. I cannot possibly be seen in the streets without a hat.

Poet. Why not?

Caller. It can't be done.

Poet. But you confuse externals with essentials.

Caller. I don't know what you call essentials, but being decently dressed in London seems pretty essential to me.

Poet. A hat is not one of the essential things of life.

Caller. I don't want to appear rude, but my hat isn't quite like yours.

Poet. Let us sit down and talk of things that matter, things that will be remembered after a hundred years. (*They sit.*) Regarded in this light one sees at once the

triviality of hats. But to die, and die beautifully for a hopeless love, that is a thing one could make a lyric about. That is the test of essential things — try and imagine them in a lyric. One could not write a lyric about a hat.

Caller. I don't care whether you could write a lyric about my hat or whether you couldn't. All I know is that I am not going to make myself absolutely ridiculous by walking about in London without a hat. Will you get it for me or will you not?

Poet. To take any part in the tuning of a piano is impossible to me.

Caller. Well, pretend you've come to look at the radiator. They have one under the window, and I happen to know it leaks.

Poet. I suppose it has an artistic decoration on it.

Caller. Yes, I think so.

Poet. Then I decline to look at it or to go near it. I know these decorations in cast iron. I once saw a pot-bellied Egyptian god, named Bēs, and he was *meant* to be ugly, but he wasn't as ugly as these decorations that the twentieth century can make with machinery. What has a plumber got to do with art that he should dare to attempt decoration?

Caller. Then you won't help me.

Poet. I won't look at ugly things and I won't listen to ugly noises, but if you can think of any reasonable plan I don't mind helping you.

Caller. I can think of nothing else. You don't look like a plumber or a clock-winder. I can think of nothing more. I have had a terrible ordeal and I am not in the condition to think calmly.

Poet. Then you will have to leave your hat to its altered destiny.

Caller. Why can't you think of a plan? If you're a poet, thinking's rather in your line.

Poet. If I could bring my thoughts to contemplate so absurd a thing as a hat for any length of time no doubt I could think of a plan, but the very triviality of the theme seems to scare them away.

Caller (*rising*). Then I must get it myself.

Poet. For Heaven's sake, don't do that! Think what it means!

Caller. I know it will seem absurd, but not so absurd as walking through London without it.

Poet. I don't mean that. But you will make it up. You will forgive each other, and you will marry her, and then Romance will be dead. No, don't ring that bell. Go and buy a bayonet, or whatever one does buy, and join the Bosnians.

Caller. I tell you I can't without a hat.

Poet. What is a hat! Will you sacrifice for it a beautiful doom? Think of your bones, neglected and forgotten, lying forlornly because of hopeless love on endless golden sands. "Lying forlorn!" as Keats said. What a word! Forlorn in Africa. The careless Bedouins going past by day, at night the lion's roar, the grievous voice of the desert.

Caller. As a matter of fact, I don't think you're right in speaking of it as desert. The Bosnians, I believe, are only taking it because it is supposed to be the most fertile land in the world.

Poet. What of that? You will not be remembered by

geography and statistics, but by golden-mouthed Romance. And that is how Romance sees Africa.

Caller. Well, I'm going to get my hat.

Poet. Think! Think! If you enter by that door you will never fall among the foremost Bosnians. You will never die in a far-off, lonely land to lie by immense Sahara. And she will never weep for your beautiful doom and call herself cruel in vain.

Caller. Hark! She is playing the piano. It seems to me that she might be unhappy about it for years. I don't see much good in that.

Poet. No. *I* will comfort her.

Caller. Look here! I don't mind saying, I'm lost if you do.

Poet. Calm yourself. Calm yourself. I do not mean in that way.

Caller. Then what on earth do you mean?

Poet. I will make songs about your beautiful death, glad songs and sad songs. They shall be glad because they tell again the noble tradition of the troubadours, and sad because they tell of your sorrowful destiny and of your hopeless love.

I shall make legends also about your lonely bones, telling perhaps how some Arabian men, finding them in the desert by some oasis, memorable in war, wonder who loved them. And then as I read them to her, she weeps perhaps a little, and I read instead of the glory of the soldier, how it overtops our transitory —

Caller. Look here, I'm not aware that you've ever been introduced to her.

Poet. A trifle, a trifle.

Caller. It seems to me that you're in rather an undue hurry for me to get a Jubu spear in me; but I'm going to get my hat first.

Poet. I appeal to you. I appeal to you in the name of beautiful battles, high deeds, and lost causes; in the name of love-tales told to cruel maidens and told in vain. In the name of stricken hearts broken like beautiful harp-strings, I appeal to you. I appeal in the ancient holy name of Romance: *do not ring that bell.*

(*Caller rings the bell.*)

Poet (*sits down, abject*). You will marry. You will sometimes take a ticket with your wife as far as Paris. Perhaps as far as Cannes. You will be like all the rest. No monument will ever be set up to your memory but —

(*Servant answers bell. Caller says something inaudible. Exit through door.*)

Poet (*rising, lifting hand*). But let there be graven in brass upon this house: Romance was born again here out of due time and died young. (*He sits down.*)

(*Enter Laborer and Clerk with* POLICEMAN. *The music stops.*)

Policeman. Anything wrong here?

Poet. Everything's wrong. They're going to kill Romance.

Policeman (*to Laborer*). This gentleman doesn't seem quite right somehow.

Laborer. They're none of them quite right to-day.

(*Music starts again.*)

Poet. My God! It is a duet.
Policeman. He seems a bit wrong somehow.
Laborer. You should 'a' seen the other one.

CURTAIN

THE THRICE PROMISED BRIDE

BY

CHENG-CHIN HSUING

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CHARACTERS

Wang Ta-Ming	The Magistrate
Tuan Chai	The Secretary
Chung Ting	The Knight
Li Che-Fu	The Wealthy Merchant
Wang Mei-Pao	The First Matchmaker
Han Chu-Yin	The Bride
The Bride's Mother	
Chien-Shou	An Old Man
Tu Kuang-Yang	The Beggar-Scholar
Liu Ma	The Second Matchmaker

Attendants, Musicians, etc.

Time: Long ago; many years before China became a republic.

Place: The Magistrate's Court in an interior district in Ho-Nan Province, China.

THE THRICE PROMISED BRIDE

The rise of the curtain, if a proscenium curtain is used, discloses a Chinese stage. There are two doors in the rear wall; the left for entrance, the right for exit. At each door there must be a curtain exquisitely embroidered with threads of gold and bright-colored silk; on the left door curtain the figure of a dragon, and on the right, the figure of a phœnix. In the center there is a table. The audience cannot see the table legs, for the table is curtained with a rich tapestry on which the figure of a unicorn is embroidered.

On the table are a pen-rack with Chinese pens; ink-stones, one for red ink, the other for black ink; a wooden block resembling a mallet; a massive wooden official seal; two carved bamboo holders for warrant-sticks; two wooden panels with the representation of a tiger's head and with Chinese inscriptions which signify to the Chinese that the scene is unmistakably in a district court. To the right of the table is a chair where The Secretary is to sit. Behind the table is the chair for The Magistrate. On the center wall we may have a picture of the God of the Theatre. But, lest The Magistrate should duplicate or intercept the picture, we had better have a painting of pear trees instead, under which the first Chinese actors are supposed to have practiced the histrionic arts. There is no other furniture on the stage.

The American audience is supposed to know the setting from the "write-up," in the newspaper, the "give-outs"

of the press agent, from the showy posters, or, even at the last minute, from the printed program. But, lest everything should fail, the American playwright has adapted the traditional Chorus and made him prepare the audience. We will keep the Chinese convention and let the principal character relate the circumstances and establish a close contact between the players and audience.

We shall not introduce the property man, since he is obtrusive to some sophisticated Chinese dramatists and to all the uninitiated Western playgoers.

Music we must have. To avoid the overwhelming din of a Chinese orchestra we will invest the power of music in a single Maker-of-Sound, behind the scene.

With the overture, in which a variety of instruments are used, the left door-curtain is raised, and THE MAGISTRATE *majestically enters with his attendants, one in front and one behind him. He has more than two attendants, but we must make imaginary puissance. He pauses before the door for a moment; then he walks gracefully down-stage. He strikes with both hands his mandarin gauze hat to pay a public homage to the emperor and to wish secretly for a promotion to higher rank. Slowly he straightens the lateral appendages of the official bonnet. (These are not in the form of the Manchurian peacock feather, but in the shape of the wings of a bat, symbolizing happiness.) Carefully he makes sure of the clasp of his stiff belt which is beautifully decorated. Augustly he smooths his imperial robe displaying the gorgeous colors and designs of his costume.*

When the audience has had enough of his front elevation, he turns, and with pompous strides proceeds to the center of the stage to exhibit his profile. He waves, sweeps, and

shakes his large and long sleeves to show that he has nothing there. Solemnly he walks up-stage to show his gorgeously embroidered back to the audience; and then he "ascends" the dedicated chair. When the applause has abated he tells his story.

The Magistrate. My humble name is Wang Ta-Ming, the magistrate of this Yen-Ling District of the Province of Ho-Nan. I was born in the Hain-Kien District of the Province of Kiangsi, of scholarly parents. At the age of eighteen moons my mother taught me to write with a reed in the sand. When I was yet wearing my hair like the tentacles of an octopus I studied the Four Books and the Five Classics. At the age of fifteen years I passed my first examination and won the degree of Blooming Talent. In my second decadal anniversary I was honored with the degree of Raised Man. The next leap year bestowed on me the rank of Entered Scholar. As a reward for my literary distinction I was appointed the magistrate of this district. I hastened to this post that I might glorify my family name. I am watched by a thousand eyes and listened to by a thousand ears, for there is always an attentive audience within these four walls. It makes me shudder to think of the important duties I have to perform. Attendants!

(*The audience's attention is directed to the attendants who have been standing on each side of the table. They are dressed alike. They wear thin, flat-soled shoes but make up in height by their tapering felt-hats. Their costumes are of plain silk painted with the emblem of the dis-*

trict court. When not employed, each leans on his bamboo stave, a much abused symbol of justice.)

Attendants. At your service, Your Honor.

The Magistrate. Call Mr. Secretary Tuan Chai!

(*The First Attendant goes out and returns immediately with* THE SECRETARY, *dressed as an old gentleman with a heavy mustache, who is ready to give the young officer his experience and opinion when needed. He carries a fan.*)

The Secretary. What is your honorable wish?

The Magistrate. Have you any invention concerning the case of the interrupted wedding?

The Secretary. I have found the matchmaker, Sir. It is time the plaintiff Chung Ting and the defendant Li Che-Fu be here.

The Magistrate. Strike the gong and open the court!

(*The gong sounds behind the stage. The attendants pull open the imaginary doors. The Chinese drama demands that acting create scenery rather than vice-versa. The people who are yet to enter must orient themselves first, walk and step to suggest to the mind of the audience, doors and steps. The military man enters briskly with accompaniment of martial music. He is dressed in the costume of an ancient* CHINESE KNIGHT, *beautifully embroidered mantle, plumed bonnet, close-fitting uniform, a sword and trim, embroidered boots. He bows to The Magistrate but does not kneel.*)

The Magistrate. Are you Chung Ting, the plaintiff?

Chung Ting. Yes, Sir, newly returned from my military career.

The Magistrate. What can you do besides disbanding the wedding procession of Li Che-Fu?

Chung Ting. I can shoot with a 300-pound bow and pierce a half-inch willow leaf 100 steps away. I can separate and pacify two fighting bulls. However, I did not expect to win a wife by sheer force, but by a prior claim.

The Magistrate. Why didn't you claim the maiden's hand before she was carried in the sedan chair to her new home?

Chung Ting. I had taken my military examination in the capital and was serving His Majesty and our country by defending the northern borders against the barbaric tribes, so I have not been able to plan to establish my own family.

The Magistrate. You didn't know your fiancée was to be married to Li Che-Fu until the wedding day?

Chung Ting. Not until I came back with my title and my plumes and my sword.

The Magistrate (*he takes a warrant stick and gives it to the First Attendant*). Bring the defendant Li Che-Fu!

(*The First Attendant goes out and returns presently with* THE RICH MERCHANT. *Gay music accompanies the entrance. The Rich Merchant is a man of about thirty years. His costume surpasses the magistrate's in richness. Like Tuan Chai, he may not use the design of dragons and clouds, but he may use the bat motif or, better, the ancient-coin motif. He wears jeweled Chinese shoes. He walks pompously into the court. As soon as he sees The Magistrate he kneels. There is no property man to assist him; such privilege is granted only to an important personage or to a famous actor. An ordinary actor is expected to take care of his cos-*

tume, however cumbersome and costly. The property man is ubiquitously watching to see that the costumes are properly displayed, and not in the actor's way. Handling any property attracts the audience's attention and spurs the audience's imagination, often to the neglect of the actor. The costume is to be admired as it is worn, much like the long train formerly worn by the Western hostess. The wearer would consider any meddling on the part of another as a kind favor, or as an insult. Thus, comfortably, and without assistance, The Wealthy Merchant prostrates himself.)

The Magistrate. Li Che-Fu, did you know this man Chung Ting?

Li Che-Fu. Not until he collided with my bridal chair, Your Honor.

The Magistrate. Did you know he was the first betrothed to the maiden of the Han family?

Li Che-Fu (*hesitating*). N——

The Magistrate (*warningly*). The truth, or the bamboo.

(*The Attendants stand erect and threaten Li Che-Fu by tapping the table sides alternately with their bamboo staves.*)

Li Che-Fu (*looks at The Secretary for advice. Tuan Chai, who has been bribed, nods his head*). I heard that my bride, Han Chu-Yin, had been promised to a person before either was born. The family of the boy moved away to the region bordering the barbaric tribes and was never heard of for twice eight years. My marriage was negotiated under the six ceremonies. All the village was invited to my feast. My matchmaker alone will establish the evidence.

(*Tuan Chai nods repeatedly and whispers to The Magistrate behind his spread fan.*)

The Magistrate. Bring the matchmaker!

(*The First Attendant goes out and returns with* THE MATCHMAKER. *The Matchmaker is often the fool or the clown in the Chinese plays. She (it might just as well be he) defies conventions, customs, all the reality and realism in the Empire and all the traditions of the world save that of the Chinese stage. She may be streak-faced and grotesquely costumed. No Chinese playwright describes this figure definitely, but grants the character all the license and the gagging which perfect or spoil the play according to which way you take it. During the clownish entrance, humorous music.*)

The Magistrate. Are you Matchmaker Wang Mei-Pao by name?

Wang Mei-Pao. By profession, mister. Are you unmarried? Do you want me?

The Magistrate. Neither yourself nor your service, but your account of the families of these people.

Wang Mei-Pao. My account, to be sure. I can make the ignorant learned; the ugly beautiful; the blind see; the deaf hear; the shrew tame; in a word poverty, riches; misery, happiness; and earth, heaven. (*The Magistrate is nonplused.*) And they all seem to believe me. They drink to my health and lift the stuff to the level of their eye brows and live together contentedly and harmoniously as the proverbial harp and lyre. (*The Magistrate murmurs as if not knowing what to do with her.*)

The Magistrate. Did you try to tie your blind and aim-

less cords around this merchant Li and the maiden of the Han family?

Wang Mei-Pao. Yes, Sir, a heaven-made match. Their ingots of gold total the same figure, the gates of the two houses cope with one another. A perfect equation withal!

The Magistrate. That is enough, you may go home.

Wang Mei-Pao (*she walks reluctantly to the right, where the retiring character may say the last word*). I live next door to the house of Everybody. Don't forget to send for me when you want to augment your family; for I know all the superb marriageable maidens in the whole district.

(*She goes out.*)

The Magistrate. Bring the Han family in!

(*The First Attendant goes out and returns directly with* HAN CHU-YIN *and her mother. The women walk downstage, between the two flags which are painted on the outside to suggest the wheel of a carriage, and are carried by supernumeraries. The supers withdraw as the women walk to the center of the stage with an accompaniment of slow and soft music, but not with mincing steps, for foot-binding has never been universal in China. It is superfluous to comment on their costumes. They are just beautiful. The designs for the young woman's costume are gay flowers and aquatic grasses of a smaller and more exquisite pattern. The young woman is about eighteen years old. The mother is old enough to require the rôle of "Lao-Tan"* [*the married woman's part*]. *Like the men without a title all women must kneel before the magistrate. In a district court or in a theater there are always enough cushions for that purpose. The women bow down low.*)

The Magistrate. Face toward the north!

(*The women face him. While he is looking at the young beauty, music expressing magnetic enchantment is played. The bashful woman turns her face from The Magistrate toward the audience.*)

The Magistrate. The looks that destroy cities, the looks that destroy kingdoms! Small wonder you men quarrel with each other. Are you Han Chu-Yin, formerly promised to Chung Ting and now being borne to the house of Li Che-Fu?

(*The young woman is so shy that she can hardly hold her head up or make an answer.*)

The Mother. Yes, my Lord, if she is nothing else.

The Magistrate. And you, her mother?

The Mother. Yes, my Lord, her only living parent.

The Magistrate. Why did you intend marrying your daughter to the Li family while there was yet an engagement contract standing between the family of Han and the family of Chung?

The Mother. Because we thought the Chung boy sacrificed himself for His Majesty, and my dear little Chu-Yin was past her peach-blooming age.

The Magistrate. You may not marry your daughter to two men. (*Softly*) I do pity your daughter. No ceremony has yet been completed. Whom do you prefer?

The Mother. I will marry . . .

Li Che-Fu. I offer you my golden ingots.

Chung Ting (*advancing*). I have my silvery horses.

Li Che-Fu. I have built my red mansion.

Chung Ting. I have won my scarlet jacket.

Li Che-Fu. My calculation always bears fruit.

Chung Ting. My arrows always hit the bull's eye.

The Mother. What say you to these genteels, my dear little Chu-Yin?

Han Chu-Yin. A maiden has no lips, but heart.

The Mother. Well, whom does your heart yearn to choose.

Han Chu-Yin. I may neither choose whom I like nor refuse whom I dislike. I do as my parent decides.

The Mother. The parent should be wiser, but I am not. (*To The Magistrate*) Your honor is the parent of the people. Graciously decide this according to your honorable will.

The Magistrate. I am not old enough to be the maiden's parent, though my intention toward her is good. (*To the men*) You deserve — (*Chung Ting takes a step toward The Magistrate; Li Che-Fu straightens himself from his knees up. The Secretary, who you remember has been bribed, whispers to The Magistrate behind his fan.*) Chung Ting, you deserve *not* to wed this maiden after you have neglected her till her prime-plum period. (*Tuan Chai grins.*)

Li Che-Fu. A Kao-Yao to the judgment!

The Magistrate. And you, Li Che-Fu, scarcely deserve to wed this maiden who might be claimed by a more worthy and younger man.

(*Both Tuan Chai and Li Che-Fu are disappointed and downcast. Tuan Chai, the secretary, again whispers behind his fan. The Magistrate pays no attention.*)

The Mother. But what are we to do with my daughter who is in her prime-plum period?

The Magistrate. I know what to do with your daughter. You just wait — (*Tuan Chai motions with his hands to Li Che-Fu and extends his six fingers — meaning the six ceremonies.*)

Li Che-Fu. But the six ceremonies, and the match-maker!

The Magistrate. She confessed herself that she could make anything out of nothing. Besides, the maiden has not entered the threshold of your house.

Chung Ting. Sir, *I* have a reliable witness. He is a very *old* man. He was witness to the verbal agreement between her father and mine. It's time he should be here.

(The Old Man *enters feebly. He is old enough to use a stick — even in a district court. His robes are embroidered with symbols of longevity. He wears a long white beard, not hanging from the chin, but from the upper lip and the jaws. Perhaps the flowing beard has been used to cover up the bad teeth — if there are any — should the character open his mouth to sing. Or maybe it is to save the trouble of make-up in extending the wrinkles to the lower quarter of the face. Anyway it is very convenient to hang up this beard at the last moment so that the player can drink tea, eat refreshments, and smoke a water pipe in the green room until his call. Our Old Man has to speak through such a heavy beard.*)

The Magistrate. Who are you?

The Old Man. I am Chien Shou, friend to Senior Chung and Senior Han.

The Magistrate. Are you a go-between?

The Old Man. Not exactly.

The Magistrate. By the hoary locks on your head I conjure you to speak the truth.

The Old Man. Precisely. It was because of *my old age* that my two friends appointed me to be the witness to their gentlemen's agreement. One asked me to be the Fairy-Below-the-Ice, the other the Aged-Person-Under-the-Moon, namely, a formal matchmaker. Said the parents-to-be to one another: "If our children be both girls, sister them; if they be both boys, brother them; if they be of opposite sex, espouse them." And I was the only witness.

The Magistrate. Was there any document? Were any betrothal gifts exchanged?

The Old Man. Nothing but their word of honor.

The Magistrate. That is scarcely valid.

The Old Man. But it is negotiable. By my three score and ten years I crave the law.

The Magistrate. Old man, do you gain anything by this union?

The Old Man. Yes, the fulfilled trust of my deceased friends. The marriage was upon even their dying lips.

The Magistrate. The law is for the living.

Chung Ting. Here I am; I, too, crave the law.

The Old Man. And I am still alive, and hale and hearty.

(*The Magistrate looks inquiringly at the women.*)

The Mother. The old man speaks the gospel truth through that heavy beard.

Han Chu-Yin. O Unkind Time, that the vase of my soul be the gossip of the court! I would rather seek the Other World.

Tuan Chai. Sir, this is a very difficult case. We should see everybody get his just reward according to law.

Chung Ting. Justice!

Li Che-Fu. The law!

The Mother. Give my daughter of the four virtues a husband!

The Magistrate. I told you to wait until . . .

(*Just at this moment* THE SCHOLAR *enters. He is not the God of the Machine, but a beggar, half dreaming, half starving. Still he has a princely bearing. His scholarly headwear is awry, his shoes have perfectly lovely tops but only half soles. His gentleman-beggar coat is all patched but made up of the most elegant silks and intricate patterns, like the frostings on a frozen window-pane. There is no hole in any part of the theatrical attire, though the outfit may have lasted the company several generations. The Scholar haughtily walks down-stage, surveys the imaginary doors, steps in, goes clear to the right, makes the motion of seizing something, and strikes the imaginary drum on high. The drum sounds behind the stage.*)

The Second Attendant (*who may have retired and be on the job just now. Unlike The First Attendant, he sulks through his duties*). Hey you, why do you drum the drum of justice? What wrong have you suffered?

(*The Scholar does not speak but hands a scroll of paper to The Second Attendant, who spreads it from left to right. The Scholar twists the paper so the right side is up. The*

Second Attendant extends his lazy palm to ask for wine-money, — an institution, like opium smoking, the Chinese dramatist wishes to slight. The Scholar turns his purse inside out, revealing nothing but an old book. He beats again the imaginary drum, emitting a louder sound. The First Attendant comes to them, pushes away The Second Attendant, snatches the paper and takes it to The Magistrate, who reads it in about the same short time.)

The Magistrate. Kao-Yao be praised! Still another disputant! (*To The Scholar*) Tu Kuang-Yang, do *you* claim the hand of this maiden? (*Everybody is startled except the girl, Han Chu-Yin, who seems to be pleased. The Scholar nods his head.*) Who is your matchmaker?

(*The Scholar goes out and returns with* THE SECOND MATCHMAKER. *Without a matchmaker a Chinese match does not strike aright. On the Chinese stage, The First Matchmaker would also play the part of The Second Matchmaker without even the outward pretense of different make-up and costumes. To furnish variety, however, we will make The Second Matchmaker old, old enough to think everything aloud in Chinese maxims. She is dressed in uncouth apparel. Much of her character and her gagging are left to the producer and the player, for even the standard acting version should not be long.*)

The Second Matchmaker. I thought some nobler and more affluent person than you would want my service. (*Seeing The Magistrate and imitating his bearing*) Oh, My Lord is handsome, clever, and young! Are you contemplating furnishing another golden mansion? I know the dwellers of any red chamber.

The Magistrate. Do you know this young man and this young maiden?

The Second Matchmaker. Yes, since they were weaned. They went to the primary school together. They studied the Book of Odes, the Book of Spring and Autumn, The Book of Filial Piety, The Book of Great Learning, Histories of The Three Ancient Celestials and The Five Dynasties, and, well (*gesticulating from the young woman to the young beggar*) the other classics that have made the young ones as they are. They rode on the same bamboo-twig horse, kicked the same shuttlecock, looked at each other in the same brass mirror, played hide-and-seek until age separated them. (*Euphuistically*) Then the girl hides herself in the red chamber, and the boy — seeks rice on the street. He has the natural capacity of eight piculs[1] and book learning of five wagon loads. He can compose the Five Phœnix Verse while pacing only seven steps. — And they were so fond of each other. One day they said to me, "Liu Ma-Ma, we have played groom and bride; when we become man and woman we will be husband and wife, and you will be the matchmaker, won't you?" And I promised them even as they promised each other.

The Magistrate. When was that?

The Second Matchmaker. It must have been in the *last* cycle of sixty years. Let me see. The ox-year has occurred twice, so probably it was the year of rats. The common denominator is six times ten. Ten stars form

[1] A picul is a man's burden; also a commercial weight varying for different commodities.

the heavenly system, and twelve creatures rule the animal kingdom. It should be about thirteen years ago.

The Magistrate. *About* thirteen years ago, Liu Ma?

The Second Matchmaker. Yes, and we did have a plague in that year. It was three years before the year of The Great Earthquake when the King Dragon whirled his trunk, six years before the Emperor moved south and made the people sing the song of the Call of the Deer, and nine years before Master Tu was admitted to the Circle of Bamboo Shoot and bestowed the blue-and-purple gown after the Red-Robe-Fairy had nodded his head to the civil examiner.

The Magistrate. How came he to this?

The Second Matchmaker. Because the long travel to the capital wasted and spent him as the chase does the hound. He was reduced to selling even his library, as the elephant disposes of his ivory; but he has induced many a hero to come back and tell his luck and aspirations to me.

The Mother. I never knew anybody aspired after me as a mother-in-law, behind my back.

The Magistrate. What evidence have you that they were willing to be husband and wife?

The Second Matchmaker. Here is a picture of the Great Monad which they painted on a triangular lantern during the Lantern Festival. (*She displays a picture of the Great Monad, a symbol of Chinese cosmogony representing the dualistic principle of man and woman, supposed to be the first Chinese philosophical document.*) The one said to the other, "That black is Yin, that's you; this white is Yang, it's I." And each of us has kept a copy as a testimony.

(*Tu Kuang-Yang takes out a similar copy from his book and Han Chu-Yin takes out her copy from her sash. All, including the Magistrate, are surprised.*)

The Magistrate (*to The Mother*). Do you wish this man as a son-in-law?

The Mother. My Lord, if my humble self be permitted to select a husband —

The Magistrate. I grant you the right to choose one, for your daughter.

The Mother. I will choose —

The Old Man. Remember the will of your departed husband.

Tuan Chai. Remember all the gossip of the villagers and the six ceremonies.

Chung Ting. My silvery horses, my scarlet jacket, and my skilled arrows.

Li Che Fu. My golden ingots, my red mansion, and my prosperity!

Tu Kuang-Yang (*speaking earnestly but reservedly for the first time*). My affection for Chu Yin.

The Mother. I think I will not choose the beggar.

Voices. No, not the beggar!

Li Che-Fu. Accept my riches!

Chung Ting. My glory!

The Old Man. My age!

Tuan Chai. My humble wish!

The Second Matchmaker. My word!

The Mother. I declare I never had so many suitors in my bygone days — not even a beggar.

The Magistrate (*to Han Chu-Yin*). Well, your mother does not approve of the beggar; what is your wish?

(*Han Chu-Yin is silent and hides her face in her sash.*)

The Magistrate. Tell me, what do you choose?

Han Chu-Yin (*distressedly*). I choose to die!

The Magistrate. In order to settle the case?

Han Chu-Yin. Yes, and quickly!

The Magistrate. Good Maiden, Kao Yao had no more sagacity in dissolving disputes, but I fear you have made up your mind to deny yourself wealth, happiness, and power which you might find in any of these people.

Han Chu Yin. I am denied that which I value most. I wish to end it all.

The Magistrate. Is that final?

Han Chu-Yin. Yes, to eternity!

The Magistrate. May your ancestor bless you! I accord you the potion that brings eternal tranquillity. (*To The Second Attendant*) Bring forth the potion phial provided by the ancients to impart to the mortal the pleasant sleep.

(*The Second Attendant goes out; this time he makes us wait for some time. Slowly he brings the potion to Han Chu-Yin. She holds it in her trembling hand; life and death struggle within her. She sighs, lingers, and sighs yet again.*)

The Magistrate. Be courageous, virtuous maiden. One dies only once; the rest is peace. If you cannot lift the phial, I shall have the attendant help you.

(*Han Chu-Yin lifts the phial to her quivering lips. The*

Mother and Tu Kuang-Yang advance toward the young woman, but are held back by the attendants. She swallows the contents at a gulp, and sinks to the floor.)

Han Chu-Yin. I depart. May peace be with all!

(*She lies down unconscious. Everybody is petrified. Solemn music. At length The Magistrate speaks.*)

The Magistrate. Well, she died a virtuous death. Li Che-Fu, she was almost married to you. Will you bury her in your family graveyard?

Li Che-Fu. I wanted a live housekeeper, not a dead wife. Since she had an early betrothal, the body belongs to the first betrothed.

The Magistrate. Chung Ting, your stars crossed each other before either of you was born. Now you can accept the will of your parents and your parents' parents, you may have your claim.

Chung Ting. We never saw each other and were not formally married. Let the legal husband or the true lover take the body.

The Magistrate. Tu Kuang-Yang, there is the spoils of your love. She was your promised wife. Will you take care of her?

Tu Kuang-Yang. Yes, I loved her. A promise is a promise. I will take her, and will follow her soon.

The Mother (*realizing what has happened, she breaks into an hysterical cry*). You beggar! You kill-joy! You will soon pay for it!

Several Voices. The beggar! The kill-joy! Hang him! Let him pay for it!

The Mother (*turning to Li Che-Fu*). You yellow dog!

(*To Chung Ting*) You spotted tiger! (*To The Old Man*) You white-whiskered monkey! (*To Tuan Chai*) You greedy rat! (*To The Second Matchmaker*) You lowly snake!

The Magistrate (*striking the mallet on the table*). Order! Order! (*The Attendants tap the table sides with their bamboo staves. The people rise to leave.*)

The Magistrate. Wait a while! The case of the thrice promised bride is not yet finished. Among you three disputants only the beggar, Tu Kuang-Yang, is a true claimant; the other two are as false as shifting sand. I hereby confiscate, Li Che-Fu, your property, and deprive you, Chung Ting, of your degrees and privileges appertaining. To you, Tu Kuang Yang, the true lover, I bestow the golden ingots of the merchant, the horses of the Knight, and the life service of Liu Ma, so that you can have feasts and rituals. And now I grant you the privilege of administering a potion to revive the unconscious but virtuous maiden from the effects of the sleeping potion I gave the maiden to be known hereafter as your legal wife.

(*The Second Attendant brings the potion to Tu Kuang-Yang who ceremoniously takes it to the heap of beautiful costumery, stoops over the beautiful face, and goes through the motion of administering the potion. Han Chu-Yin comes to consciousness, and is bewildered at seeing Tu Kuang-Yang bending over her.*)

Han Chu-Yin. Am I dreaming, or are we meeting in the Other World?

Tu Kuang-Yang. No, my beloved, we are under the sky, on the earth, and in the Middle Kingdom.

The Mother. And before all these people! (*Gesticulating*)

The Magistrate. Han Chu-Yin, I marry you to Tu Kuang-Yang and give you wealth, happiness, and love in one.

(*Successively he applies black ink and red ink with the Chinese brushes and then imprints his official seal to the three copies of The Great Monad.*

The couple kowtow to The Magistrate and then to The Mother. The Second Matchmaker and The Mother help the couple to get up, holding the pictures of The Great Monad over their heads.)

Bridegroom (*facing the audience*). Long live my wife!

THE BOOR

BY

ANTON CHEKHOV

Translated by

BARRETT H. CLARK AND H. R. BANKHAGE

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PERSONS IN THE PLAY

HELENA IVANOVNA POPOV, a young widow, mistress of a country estate.

GRIGORI STEPANOVITCH SMIRNOV, proprietor of a country estate.

LUKA, servant of Mrs. Popov.

A Gardener. A Coachman. Several Workmen.

SCENE: The estate of Mrs. Popov.

TIME: The present.

THE BOOR

SCENE: — *A well-furnished reception-room in Mrs. Popov's home.* MRS. POPOV *is discovered in deep mourning, sitting on a sofa, gazing steadfastly at a photograph.* LUKA *is also present.*

Luka. It isn't right, ma'am. You're wearing yourself out! The maid and the cook have gone looking for berries; everything that breathes is enjoying life, even the cat knows how to be happy — slips about the courtyard and catches birds — but you hide yourself here in the house as though you were in a cloister. Why, by actual reckoning you haven't left this house for a whole year.

Mrs. Popov. And I shall never leave it — why should I? My life is over. He lies in his grave, and I have buried myself within these four walls. We are both dead.

Luka. There you are again! It's too awful to listen to, it is! Nikolai Michailovitch is dead; it was the will of the Lord, and the Lord has given him eternal peace. You have grieved over it and that ought to be enough. Now it's time to stop. One can't weep and wear mourning forever! My wife died a few years ago. I grieved for her, I wept a whole month — and then it was over. Must one be forever singing lamentations? That would be more than your husband was worth! (*He sighs.*)

You have forgotten all your neighbors. You don't go out and you receive no one. We live, — you'll pardon me — like the spiders, and the good light of day we never see. All the livery is eaten by the mice — as though there weren't any more pleasant people in the world! But the whole neighborhood is full of gentlefolk. The regiment is stationed in Riblov — officers — simply beautiful! One can't see enough of them! Every Friday a ball, and military music every day. Oh, my dear, dear ma'am, young and pretty as you are, if you'd only let your spirits live —! Beauty can't last forever. When ten short years are over, you'll be glad enough to go out a bit and meet the officers — but then it'll be too late.

Mrs. Popov (*resolutely*). Please don't speak of these things again. You know very well that since the death of Nikolai Michailovitch my life means absolutely nothing to me. You think I live, but it only seems so. Do you understand? Oh, that his departed soul might see how I love him! I know, it's no secret to you; he was often unjust toward me, cruel, and — he wasn't faithful, but I shall be faithful to the grave and prove to him how *I* can love. There, in the Beyond, he'll find me the same as I was until his death.

Luka. What is the use of all these words, when you'd so much rather go walking in the garden or order Tobby or Welikan harnessed to the trap, and visit the neighbors?

Mrs. Popov (*weeping*). Oh! Oh!

Luka. Madam, dear Madam, what is it? In Heaven's name!

Mrs. Popov. He loved Tobby so! He always drove him to the Kortschagins or the Vlassovs. What a won-

derful horseman he was! How fine he looked when he pulled at the reins with all his might! Tobby, Tobby — give him an extra measure of oats to-day!

Luka. Yes, ma'am.

(*A bell rings loudly.*)

Mrs. Popov (*shudders*). What's that? I am at home to no one.

Luka. Yes, ma'am. (*He goes out.*)

Mrs. Popov (*gazing at the photograph*). You shall see, Nikolai, how I can love and forgive! My love will die only with me — when my poor heart stops beating. (*She smiles through her tears.*) Now aren't you ashamed? I have been a good, true wife, I have imprisoned myself here and I shall remain true until death, and you — you — you're not ashamed of yourself, you dear monster! You quarreled with me, left me alone for weeks at a time —

(*Luka enters in great excitement.*)

Luka. Oh, ma'am, someone is asking for you, insists on seeing you ——

Mrs. Popov. Did you say that since my husband's death I receive no one?

Luka. I did, but he won't listen, he says it is a pressing matter.

Mrs. Popov. I receive no one!

Luka. I told him, but he's a wild man, he swore and pushed himself into the room; he's in the dining-room now.

Mrs. Popov (*excitedly*). Good! Show him in. The impudent —!

(*Luka goes out.*)

Mrs. Popov. What a bore people are! What can they want with me? Why do they disturb my peace? (*She sighs.*) I must certainly enter a convent. (*Meditatively*) Yes, a convent.

(SMIRNOV *enters, followed by Luka.*)

Smirnov (*to Luka*). Fool, you make too much noise! You're an ass! (*Discovering Mrs. Popov — politely*) Madam, I have the honor to introduce myself: Lieutenant in the Artillery, retired, country gentleman, Grigori Stepanovitch Smirnov! I'm compelled to bother you about an exceedingly important matter.

Mrs. Popov (*without offering her hand*). What is it you wish?

Smirnov. Your deceased husband, with whom I had the honor to be acquainted, left me two notes amounting to about twelve hundred rubles.[1] Inasmuch as I have to pay the interest to-morrow on a loan from the Agrarian Bank, I should like to request, madam, that you pay me the money to-day.

Mrs. Popov. Twelve hundred — and for what was my husband indebted to you?

Smirnov. He bought oats from me.

Mrs. Popov (*with a sigh, to Luka*). Don't forget to give Tobby an extra measure of oats.

(*Luka goes out.*)

Mrs. Popov (*to Smirnov*). If Nikolai Michailovitch is indebted to you, I shall of course pay you, but I am sorry I have not the money to-day. To-morrow my manager

[1] A ruble is worth about fifty cents.

will return from the city and I shall notify him to pay you what is due, but until then I cannot comply with your request. Furthermore, to-day it is just seven months since my husband's death, and I am not in a mood to discuss money matters.

Smirnov. But I am in the mood to fly up the chimney with my feet in the air if I can't lay hands on that interest to-morrow. They'll seize my estate!

Mrs. Popov. Day after to-morrow you will receive the money.

Smirnov. I don't need the money day after to-morrow, I need it to-day.

Mrs. Popov. I'm sorry I cannot pay you to-day.

Smirnov. And I can't wait until the day after to-morrow.

Mrs. Popov. But what can I do if I haven't it?

Smirnov. So you can't pay?

Mrs. Popov. I cannot.

Smirnov. Is that your last word?

Mrs. Popov. My last.

Smirnov. Absolutely?

Mrs. Popov. Absolutely.

Smirnov. Thank you. (*He shrugs his shoulders.*) The toll-gatherer just now met me in the road and asked me why I was always worrying. Why in Heaven's name shouldn't I worry? I need money, I feel the knife at my throat. Yesterday morning I left my house in the early dawn and called on all my debtors. If even one of them had paid what he owed me! I worked the skin off my fingers! The devil knows in what sort of inn I slept: in a room with a barrel of brandy! And now at last I

come here, seventy versts[1] from home, with the expectation of receiving a little money and all you give me is moods! Why shouldn't I worry?

Mrs. Popov. I thought I made it plain to you that my manager will return from town, and that you will have your money.

Smirnov. I did not come to see the manager, I came to see you. What do I care for your manager?

Mrs. Popov. Really, sir, I am not used to such manners. I shan't listen to you any further. (*She goes out, left.*)

Smirnov. What do you say to that? Moods! Seven months since her husband died! Do I have to pay the interest or not? I repeat the question, have I to pay the interest or not? The husband is dead and all that; the manager is — the devil with him! — traveling somewhere. Tell me, what am I to do? Shall I escape from my creditors in a balloon? Or knock my head against a stone wall? If I call on Grusdev he is "not at home," Iroschevitch has hidden himself, I quarreled with Kurzin and came near throwing him out of the window, Masutov is ill and this woman has — moods! Not one of them will pay up! And all because I've spoiled them, because I'm an old whiner, a dish-rag! I'm too tender-hearted with them. But wait! I allow nobody to play tricks with me. I'll stay here and not budge until she pays! Brr! How angry I am, how terribly angry I am! Every tendon is trembling with rage and I can hardly breathe! I'm even growing ill! (*He calls out.*) Servant!

(*Luka enters.*)

[1] A verst is equal to two-thirds of a mile.

Luka. What is it you wish?

Smirnov. Bring me kvas,[1] or water! (*Luka goes out.*) Well, what can we do? She hasn't it on hand? What sort of logic is that? A fellow stands with a knife at his throat, needs money, is on the point of hanging himself, and she won't pay because she isn't in the mood to discuss money matters. Woman's logic! I never liked to talk to women, I would rather sit on a powder barrel. Brr! — I'm getting cold as ice, this affair has made me so angry. I need only to see such a romantic creature from a distance to get so angry that I have cramps in the calves of my legs! It's enough to make one yell for help!

(*Enter Luka.*)

Luka (*hands him water*). Madam is ill and is not receiving.

Smirnov. March! (*Luka goes out.*) Ill and not receiving! All right, it isn't necessary. I won't receive, either! I'll sit here until you bring that money. If you're ill a week, I'll sit here a week. If you're ill a year, I'll sit here a year. As Heaven is my witness, I'll get the money. I don't mind your mourning — or your dimples. We know those dimples! (*He calls out the window.*) Simon, unharness! We aren't going to leave yet. I am going to stay here. Tell them in the stable to give the horses oats. The left horse has twisted the bridle again. (*Imitating him*) Stop! I'll show you. Stop! (*Leaves window.*) It's awful. Unbearable heat, no money, didn't sleep last night and now — mourning-dresses and moods. My head aches; perhaps I ought to

[1] A kind of beer.

have a drink. Ye-s, I must have a drink. (*Calling*) Servant!

Luka. What do you wish?

Smirnov. Something to drink! (*Luka goes out. Smirnov sits down and looks at his clothes.*) Ugh, a fine figure! No use denying that. Dust, dirty boots, unwashed, uncombed, straw on my vest — the lady doubtless took me for a highwayman. (*He yawns.*) It was a little impolite to come into a reception room with such clothes. Oh, well, no harm done. I'm not here as a guest. I'm a creditor. And there is no required costume for creditors.

Luka (*entering with glass*). You take great liberties, sir.

Smirnov (*angrily*). What?

Luka. I — I — I just ——

Smirnov. Whom are you talking to? Keep quiet.

Luka (*angrily*). Nice mess! This fellow won't leave! (*He goes out.*)

Smirnov. How angry I am! Angry enough to throw mud at the whole world! I feel ill! Servant!

(*Mrs. Popov comes in with downcast eyes.*)

Mrs. Popov. Sir, in my solitude I have become unaccustomed to the human voice; I cannot stand the sound of loud talking. I beg you please to cease disturbing my rest.

Smirnov. Pay me my money and I'll leave.

Mrs. Popov. I told you once, plainly in your native tongue, that I haven't the money on hand; wait until the day after to-morrow.

Smirnov. And I also had the honor of informing you in your native tongue that I need the money, not the day after to-morrow, but to-day. If you don't pay me to-day I shall have to hang myself to-morrow.

Mrs. Popov. But what can I do if I haven't the money?

Smirnov. You are not going to pay immediately?

Mrs. Popov. I cannot.

Smirnov. Then I'll sit here until I get the money. (*He sits down.*) You will pay day after to-morrow? Excellent! Here I stay until day after to-morrow. (*Jumps up.*) I ask you, do I have to pay that interest to-morrow, or not? Perhaps you think I'm joking?

Mrs. Popov. Sir, I beg you, don't scream! This is not a stable.

Smirnov. I'm not talking about stables, I'm asking you whether I have to pay that interest to-morrow or not?

Mrs. Popov. You have no idea how to treat a lady.

Smirnov. Indeed?

Mrs. Popov. No, you have not. You are an ill-bred, vulgar person! Respectable people don't speak so to ladies.

Smirnov. Oh, yes, I have. How remarkable! How do you want one to speak to you? In French, perhaps! *Madame, je vous prie!* Pardon me for having disturbed you. What beautiful weather we are having to-day! And how this mourning becomes you! (*He makes a low bow with mock ceremony.*)

Mrs. Popov. That is not funny! I think it just vulgar!

Smirnov (*imitating her*). Not funny — vulgar! I don't understand how to behave in the company of ladies.

Madam, in the course of my life I have seen more women than you have sparrows. Three times have I fought duels for women, twelve I jilted and nine jilted me. There was a time when I played the fool, used honeyed language, bowed and scraped and all that! I loved, suffered, sighed to the moon, melted in love's torments. I loved passionately, I loved to madness, loved in every key, chattered like a magpie on emancipation, sacrificed half my fortune to the tender passion, until now the devil knows I've had enough of it. Your obedient servant will let you lead him around by the nose no more. Enough! Black eyes, passionate eyes, coral lips, dimpled cheeks, moonlight whispers, soft, modest sighs, — for all that, madam, I wouldn't give a kopeck![1] I am not speaking of present company, but of women in general; from the tiniest to the greatest, they are conceited, hypocritical, chattering, odious, deceitful from top to toe; vain, petty, cruel with a maddening logic and (*He taps his forehead.*) in this respect, please excuse my frankness, but one sparrow is worth ten of the aforementioned petticoat-philosophers. When one sees one of the romantic creatures before him he imagines he is looking at some holy being, so wonderful that one breath could dissolve him in a sea of a thousand charms and delights; but if one looks into the soul — it's nothing but a common crocodile. (*He seizes the armchair and breaks it in two.*) But the worst of all is that this crocodile imagines it is a masterpiece of creation, and that it has a monopoly on all the tender passions. May I hang upside down if there is anything to love about a woman! When she is in love, all she knows is how to

[1] A coin worth about half a cent.

complain and shed tears. If the man suffers and makes sacrifices she swings her train about and tries to lead him by the nose. You have the misfortune to be a woman, and naturally you know woman's nature; tell me on your honor, have you ever in your life seen a woman who was really true and faithful? Never! Only the old and the deformed are true and faithful. It's easier to find a cat with horns or a white woodcock, than a faithful woman.

Mrs. Popov. But allow me to ask, who is true and faithful in love? The man, perhaps?

Smirnov. Yes, indeed! The men!

Mrs. Popov. The men! (*She laughs sarcastically.*) The men true and faithful in love! Well, that is something *new!* (*Bitterly*) How can you make such a statement? Men true and faithful! So long as we have gone this far, I may as well say that of all the men I have known, my husband was the best; I loved him passionately with all my soul, as only a young, sensible woman can love; I gave him my youth, my happiness, my fortune, my life. I worshiped him like a heathen. And what happened? This best of men deceived me in every possible way. He wasted my money and joked at my feelings, — and in spite of everything, I trusted him and was true to him. And more than that: he is dead and I am still true to him. I have buried myself within these four walls and I shall wear this mourning to my grave.

Smirnov (*laughing disrespectfully*). Mourning! What on earth do you take me for? As if I didn't know why you wore this black domino, and why you buried yourself within these four walls. Such a secret! So romantic! Some knight will pass the castle, gaze up at the windows

and think to himself: "Here dwells the mysterious Tamara who, for love of her husband, has buried herself within four walls." Oh, I understand the art!

Mrs. Popov (*springing up*). What? What do you mean by saying such things to me?

Smirnov. You have buried yourself alive, but meanwhile you have not forgotten to powder your nose!

Mrs. Popov. How dare you speak so?

Smirnov. Don't scream at me, please; I'm not the manager. Allow me to call things by their right names. I am not a woman, and I am accustomed to speak out what I think. So please don't scream.

Mrs. Popov. I'm not screaming. It is you who are screaming. Please leave me, I beg you.

Smirnov. Pay me my money and I'll leave.

Mrs. Popov. I won't give you the money.

Smirnov. You won't give me my money?

Mrs. Popov. I don't care what you do. You won't get a kopeck! Leave me!

Smirnov. As I haven't the pleasure of being either your husband or your fiancé, there is no need of making a scene. (*He sits down.*) I can't stand it.

Mrs. Popov (*breathing hard*). You are going to sit down?

Smirnov. I *have* sat down.

Mrs. Popov. Kindly leave the house!

Smirnov. Give me the money.

Mrs. Popov. I don't care to speak with impudent men. Leave! (*Pause*) You aren't going?

Smirnov. No.

Mrs. Popov. No?

Smirnov. No.

Mrs. Popov. Very well. (*She rings the bell.*)

(*Enter Luka.*)

Mrs. Popov. Luka, show the gentleman out.

Luka (*going to Smirnov*). Sir, why don't you leave when you are ordered? What do you want?

Smirnov (*jumping up*). Whom do you think you are talking to? I'll grind you to powder.

Luka (*puts his hand to his heart. He drops into a chair*). Oh, I'm ill, I can't breathe!

Mrs. Popov. Where is Dasha? (*Calling*) Dasha! Pelageja! Dasha! (*She rings.*)

Luka. They're all gone! I'm ill! Water!

Mrs. Popov (*to Smirnov*). Leave! Get out!

Smirnov. Kindly be a little more polite!

Mrs. Popov (*striking her fists and stamping her feet*). You are vulgar! You're a boor! A monster!

Smirnov. What did you say?

Mrs. Popov. I said you were a boor, a monster!

Smirnov (*steps toward her quickly*). Permit me to ask by what right you insult me?

Mrs. Popov. Do you think I am afraid of you?

Smirnov. And you think that because you are a romantic creature you can insult me without being punished? I challenge you!

Luka. Merciful heaven! Water!

Smirnov. We'll have a duel.

Mrs. Popov. Do you think because you have big fists and a steer's neck I am afraid of you?

Smirnov. I allow no one to insult me, and I make no

exception because you are a woman, one of the "weaker sex"!

Mrs. Popov (*trying to cry him down*). Boor, boor, boor!

Smirnov. It is high time we did away with the old superstition that it is only the man who is forced to give satisfaction. If there is equity at all let there be equity in all things.

Mrs. Popov. You wish to fight a duel? Very well.

Smirnov. Immediately.

Mrs. Popov. Immediately. My husband had pistols. I'll bring them. (*She hurries away, then turns.*) Oh, what a pleasure it will be to put a bullet in your impudent head. (*She goes out.*)

Smirnov. I'll shoot her down! I'm no fledgling, no sentimental young puppy. For me, there is no weaker sex!

Luka. Oh, sir! (*Falls to his knees.*) Have mercy on me, an old man, and go away. You have frightened me to death already, and now you want to fight a duel.

Smirnov (*paying no attention*). A duel. That's equity, emancipation. I'll shoot her down as a matter of principle. What can you say to such a woman? (*Imitating her*) "The devil take you. I'll put a bullet in your impudent head." She was angry, her eyes blazed, she accepted the challenge. On my honor, it's the first time in my life I ever saw such a woman.

Luka. Oh, sir. Go away. Go away!

Smirnov. She *is* a woman. I can understand her. A real woman. No shilly-shallying, but fire, powder, and noise! It would be a pity to shoot a woman like that.

"Boor, boor, boor!"

Luka (*weeping*). Oh, sir, go away.

(*Enter Mrs. Popov.*)

Mrs. Popov. Here are the pistols. But before we have our duel please show me how to shoot. I have never held a pistol in my hand before!

Luka. God be merciful and have pity upon us! I'll go and get the gardener and the coachman. Why has this horror come to us? (*He goes out.*)

Smirnov (*looking at the pistols*). You see, there are different kinds. There are special dueling pistols with cap and ball. But these are revolvers, Smith & Wesson, with ejectors; fine pistols! A pair like that must have cost at least ninety rubles. This is the way to hold a revolver. (*Aside*) Those eyes, those eyes! A real woman!

Mrs. Popov. Like this?

Smirnov. Yes, that way. Then you pull the hammer back — so — then you aim — put your head back a little. Just stretch your arm out, please. So — then press your finger on the thing like that, and that is all. The chief thing is this: don't get excited, don't hurry in taking aim, and be careful your hand doesn't tremble.

Mrs. Popov. It isn't wise to shoot indoor; let's go into the garden.

Smirnov. Yes. I'll tell you now, I am going to shoot into the air.

Mrs. Popov. Nonsense! Why?

Smirnov. Because — because. That's my business.

Mrs. Popov. You are afraid. Yes. A-h-h-h. No, no, my dear sir, no flinching! Please follow me. I

won't rest until I've made a hole in that head I hate so much. Are you afraid?

Smirnov. Yes, I'm afraid.

Mrs. Popov. You are lying. Why won't you fight?

Smirnov. Because — because — I — like you.

Mrs. Popov (*with an angry laugh*). You like me! He dares to say he likes me! (*She points to the door.*) Go.

Smirnov (*laying the revolver silently on the table, takes his hat and starts. At the door he stops a moment, gazing at her silently, then approaches her, hesitating*). Listen! Are you still angry? I was mad, but please understand me — how can I express myself? The thing is like this — such things are — (*He raises his voice.*) Now, is it my fault that you owe me money? (*Grasps the back of the chair, which breaks.*) What breakable furniture you have! I like you! Do you understand? I — I'm almost in love!

Mrs. Popov. Leave! I hate you.

Smirnov. Lord! What a woman! I never in my life met one like her. I'm lost, ruined! I've been caught like a mouse in a trap.

Mrs. Popov. Go, or I'll shoot.

Smirnov. Shoot! You have no idea what happiness it would be to expire in sight of those beautiful eyes, to die from the revolver in that little velvet hand! I'm mad! Consider it and decide immediately, for if I go now, we shall never see each other again. Decide — speak — I am of noble blood, a respectable man, I have an income of ten thousand, can shoot a coin thrown into the air. I own some fine horses. Will you be my wife?

Mrs. Popov (*swings the revolver angrily*). I'll shoot!

Smirnov. My mind is not clear — I can't understand. Servant — water! I have fallen in love like any ordinary young fool. (*He takes her hand and she cries with pain.*) I love you! (*He kneels.*) I love you as I have never loved before. Twelve women I jilted, nine jilted me, but not one of them all have I loved as I love you. I am conquered, lost, I lie at your feet like an idiot and beg for your hand. Shame and disgrace! For five years I haven't been in love with anyone; I thanked the Lord for it, and now I am caught. I beg for your hand! Yes, or no? Will you? — Good! (*He gets up and goes quickly to the door.*)

Mrs. Popov. Wait a moment!

Smirnov (*stopping*). Well?

Mrs. Popov. Nothing. You may go. But — wait a moment. No, go on, go on. I hate you. Or — no: don't go. Oh, if you knew how angry I was, how angry! (*She throws the revolver on to the chair.*) My finger is swollen from this thing. (*She angrily tears her handkerchief.*) What are you standing there for? Get out!

Smirnov. Farewell!

Mrs. Popov. Yes, go. (*Cries out.*) Why are you going? Wait — no, go!! Oh, how angry I am! Don't come too near, don't come too near — er — come — no nearer.

Smirnov (*approaching her*). How angry I am with myself! To fall in love like a schoolboy, throw myself on my knees. I've got a chill! (*Strongly*) I love you. This is fine — all I needed was to fall in love. To-morrow I have to pay my interest, the hay harvest has

begun, and then you appear! (*He approaches her.*) I can never forgive myself.

Mrs. Popov. Go away! Take your hands off me! I hate you — you — this is — (*They are about to embrace.*)

(*Enter Luka with an ax, the gardener with a rake, the coachman with a pitchfork, and workmen with poles.*)

Luka (*staring at the pair*). Merciful Heavens! (*A long pause*)

Mrs. Popov (*dropping her eyes*). Tell them in the stable that Tobby isn't to have any more oats.

CURTAIN

THE WORKHOUSE WARD

BY

LADY GREGORY

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PERSONS

Mike McInerney Michael Miskell	Paupers
Mrs. Donohoe	A countrywoman

THE WORKHOUSE WARD

SCENE: — *A ward in Cloon Workhouse. The two old men in their beds.*

Michael Miskell. Isn't it a hard case, Mike McInerney, myself and yourself to be left here in the bed, and it the feast day of Saint Colman, and the rest of the ward attending on the Mass.

Mike McInerney. Is it sitting up by the hearth you are wishful to be, Michael Miskell, with cold in the shoulders and with speckled shins? Let you rise up so, and you well able to do it, not like myself that has pains the same as tin-tacks within in my inside.

Michael Miskell. If you have pains within in your inside there is no one can see it or know of it the way they can see my own knees that are swelled up with the rheumatism, and my hands that are twisted in ridges the same as an old cabbage stalk. It is easy to be talking about soreness and about pains, and they maybe not to be in it at all.

Mike McInerney. To open me and to analyse me you would know what sort of a pain and a soreness I have in my heart and in my chest. But I'm not one like yourself to be cursing and praying and tormenting the time the nuns are at hand, thinking to get a bigger share than myself of the nourishment and of the milk.

Michael Miskell. That's the way you do be picking at me and faulting me. I had a share and a good share in my early time, and it's well you know that, and the both of us reared in Skehanagh.

Mike McInerney. You may say that, indeed we are both of us reared in Skehanagh. Little wonder you to have good nourishment the time we were both rising, and you bringing away my rabbits out of the snare.

Michael Miskell. And you didn't bring away my own eels, I suppose, I was after spearing in the Turlough? Selling them to the nuns in the convent you did, and letting on they be your own. For you were always a cheater and a schemer, grabbing every earthly thing for your own profit.

Mike McInerney. And you were no grabber yourself, I suppose, till your land and all you had grabbed wore away from you!

Michael Miskell. If I lost it itself, it was through the crosses I met with and I going through the world. I never was a rambler and a card-player like yourself, Mike McInerney, that ran through all and lavished it unknown to your mother!

Mike McInerney. Lavished it, is it? And if I did was it you yourself led me to lavish it or some other one? It is on my own floor I would be to-day and in the face of my family, but for the misfortune I had to be put with a bad next-door neighbor that was yourself. What way did my means go from me is it? Spending on fencing, spending on walls, making up gates, putting up doors, that would keep your hens and your ducks from coming in through starvation on my floor, and every four-footed

beast you had from preying and trespassing on my oats and my mangolds and my little lock of hay!

Michael Miskell. Oh, to listen to you! And I striving to please you and to be kind to you and to close my ears to the abuse you would be calling and letting out of your mouth. To trespass on your crops is it? It's little temptation there was for my poor beasts to ask to cross the mering. What had you but a little corner of a field!

Mike McInerney. And what do you say to my garden that your two pigs had destroyed on me the year of the big tree being knocked, and they making gaps in the wall.

Michael Miskell. Ah, there does be a great deal of gaps knocked in a twelvemonth. Why wouldn't they be knocked by the thunder, the same as the tree, or some storm that came up from the west?

Mike McInerney. It was the west wind, I suppose so, that devoured my green cabbage? And that rooted up my Champion potatoes? And that ate the gooseberries themselves from off the bush?

Michael Miskell. What are you saying? The two quietest pigs ever I had, no way wicked and well ringed. They were not ten minutes in it. It would be hard for them eat strawberries in that time, let alone gooseberries that's full of thorns.

Mike McInerney. They were not quiet, but very ravenous pigs you had that time, as active as a fox they were, killing my young ducks. Once they had blood tasted you couldn't stop them.

Michael Miskell. And what happened myself the fair day of Esserkelly, the time I was passing your door? Two brazened dogs that rushed out and took a piece of

me. I never was the better of it or of the start I got, but wasting from then till now!

Mike McInerney. Thinking you were a wild beast they did, that had made his escape out of the traveling show, with the red eyes of you and the ugly face of you, and the two crooked legs of you that wouldn't hardly stop a pig in a gap. Sure any dog that had any life in it at all would be roused and stirred seeing the like of you going the road!

Michael Miskell. I did well taking out a summons against you that time. It is a great wonder you not to have been bound over through your lifetime, but the laws of England is queer.

Mike McInerney. What ailed me that I did not summons yourself after you stealing away the clutch of eggs I had in the barrel, and I away in Ardrahan searching out a clucking hen.

Michael Miskell. To steal your eggs is it? Is that what you are saying now? (*Holds up his hands.*) The Lord is in heaven, and Peter and the saints, and yourself that was in Ardrahan that day put a hand on them as soon as myself! Isn't it a bad story for me to be wearing out my days beside you the same as a spanceled goat. Chained I am and tethered I am to a man that is ransacking his mind for lies!

Mike McInerney. If it is a bad story for you, Michael Miskell, it is a worse story again for myself. A Miskell to be next and near me through the whole of the four quarters of the year. I never heard there to be any great name on the Miskells as there was on my own race and name.

Michael Miskell. You didn't, is it? Well, you could hear it if you had but ears to hear it. Go across to Lisheen Crannagh and down to the sea and to Newtown Lynch and the mills of Duras and you'll find a Miskell, and as far as Dublin!

Mike McInerney. What signifies Crannagh and the mills of Duras? Look at all my own generations that are buried at the Seven Churches. And how many generations of the Miskells are buried in it? Answer me that!

Michael Miskell. I tell you but for the wheat that was to be sowed there would be more side cars and more common cars at my father's funeral (God rest his soul!) than at any funeral ever left your own door. And as to my mother, she was a Cuffe from Claregalway, and it's she had the purer blood!

Mike McInerney. And what do you say to the banshee?[1] Isn't she apt to have knowledge of the ancient race? Was ever she heard to screech or to cry for the Miskells? Or for the Cuffes from Claregalway? She was not, but for the six families, the Hyneses, the Foxes, the Faheys, the Dooleys, the McInerneys. It is of the nature of the McInerneys she is I am thinking, crying them the same as a king's children.

Michael Miskell. It is a pity the banshee not to be crying for yourself at this minute, and giving you a warning to quit your lies and your chat and your arguing and your contrary ways; for there is no one under the rising

[1] A fairy, elf, or supernatural being supposed by some of the Irish peasantry to sing a mournful song under the window of the house, when one of the inmates is about to die.

sun could stand you. I tell you you are not behaving as in the presence of the Lord!

Mike McInerney. Is it wishful for my death you are? Let it come and meet me now and welcome so long as it will part me from yourself! And I say, and I would kiss the book on it, I to have one request only to be granted, and I leaving it in my will, it is what I would request, nine furrows of the field, nine ridges of the hills, nine waves of the ocean to be put between your grave and my own grave the time we will be laid in the ground!

Michael Miskell. Amen to that! Nine ridges, is it? No, but let the whole ridge of the world separate us till the Day of Judgment! I would not be laid anear you at the Seven Churches, I to get to Ireland without a divide!

Mike McInerney. And after that again! I'd sooner than ten pound in my hand, I to know that my shadow and my ghost will not be knocking about with your shadow and your ghost, and the both of us waiting our time. I'd sooner be delayed in Purgatory! Now have you anything to say?

Michael Miskell. I have everything to say if I had but the time to say it!

Mike McInerney (*sitting up*). Let me up out of this till I'll choke you!

Michael Miskell. You scolding pauper you!

Mike McInerney (*shaking his fist at him*). Wait a while!

Michael Miskell (*shaking his fist*). Wait a while yourself!

(MRS. DONOHOE *comes in with a parcel. She is a countrywoman with a frilled cap and a shawl. She stands still*

a minute. The two old men lie down and compose themselves.)

Mrs. Donohoe. They bade me come up here by the stair. I never was in this place at all. I don't know am I right. Which now of the two of ye is Mike McInerney?

Mike McInerney. Who is it is calling me by my name?

Mrs. Donohoe. Sure amn't I your sister, Honor McInerney that was, that is now Honor Donohoe.

Mike McInerney. So you are, I believe. I didn't know you till you pushed anear me. It is time indeed for you to come see me, and I in this place five year or more. Thinking me to be no credit to you, I suppose, among that tribe of the Donohoes. I wonder they to give you leave to come ask am I living yet or dead?

Mrs. Donohoe. Ah, sure, I buried the whole string of them, Himself was the last to go. (*Wipes her eyes.*) The Lord be praised he got a fine natural death. Sure we must go through our crosses. And he got a lovely funeral; it would delight you to hear the priest reading the Mass. My poor John Donohoe! A nice clean man, you couldn't but be fond of him. Very severe on the tobacco he was, but he wouldn't touch the drink.

Mike McInerney. And is it in Curranroe you are living yet?

Mrs. Donohoe. It is so. He left all to myself. But it is a lonesome thing the head of a house to have died!

Mike McInerney. I hope that he has left you a nice way of living?

Mrs. Donohoe. Fair enough, fair enough. A wide

lovely house I have; a few acres of grass land . . . the grass does be very sweet that grows among the stones. And as to the sea, there is something from it every day of the year, a handful of periwinkles to make kitchen,[1] or cockles maybe. There is many a thing in the sea is not decent, but cockles is fit to put before the Lord!

Mike McInerney. You have all that! And you without e'er a man in the house?

Mrs. Donohoe. It is what I am thinking, yourself might come and keep me company. It is no credit to me a brother of my own to be in this place at all.

Mike McInerney. I'll go with you! Let me out of this! It is the name of the McInerneys will be rising on every side!

Mrs. Donohoe. I don't know. I was ignorant of you being kept to the bed.

Mike McInerney. I am not kept to it, but maybe an odd time when there is a colic rises up within me. My stomach always gets better the time there is a change in the moon. I'd like well to draw anear you. My heavy blessing on you, Honor Donohoe, for the hand you have held out to me this day.

Mrs. Donohoe. Sure you could be keeping the fire in, and stirring the pot with the bit of Indian meal for the hens, and milking the goat and taking the tacklings off the donkey at the door; and maybe putting out the cabbage plants in their time. For when the old man died the garden died.

Mike McInerney. I could to be sure, and be cutting the potatoes for seed. What luck could there be in a

[1] Shell-fish to make a relish.

place and a man not be in it? Is that now a suit of clothes you have brought with you?

Mrs. Donohoe. It is so, the way you will be tasty coming in among the neighbors at Curranroe.

Mike McInerney. My joy you are! It is well you earned me! Let me up out of this! (*He sits up and spreads out the clothes and tries on coat.*) That now is a good frieze coat . . . and a hat in the fashion. . . . (*He puts on hat.*)

Michael Miskell (*alarmed*). And is it going out of this you are, Mike McInerney?

Mike McInerney. Don't you hear I am going. To Curranroe I am going. Going I am to a place where I will get every good thing!

Michael Miskell. And is it to leave me here after you you will?

Mike McInerney (*in a rising chant*). Every good thing! The goat and the kid are there, the sheep and the lamb are there, the cow does be running and she coming to be milked! Ploughing and seed sowing, blossom at Christmas time, the cuckoo speaking through the dark days of the year! Ah, what are you talking about? Wheat high in hedges, no talk about the rent! Salmon in the rivers as plenty as turf! Spending and getting and nothing scarce! Sport and pleasure, and music on the strings! Age will go from me and I will be young again. Geese and turkeys for the hundreds and drink for the whole world!

Michael Miskell. Ah, Mike, is it truth you are saying, you to go from me and to leave me with rude people and with townspeople, and with people of every parish in the

union, and they having no respect for me and no wish for me at all!

Mike McInerney. Whist now and I'll leave you . . . my pipe; (*Hands it over.*) and I'll engage it is Honor Donohoe won't refuse to be sending you a few ounces of tobacco an odd time, and neighbors coming to the fair in November or in the month of May.

Michael Miskell. Ah, what signifies tobacco? All that I am craving is the talk. There to be no one at all to say out to whatever thought might be rising in my innate mind! To be lying here and no conversible person in it would be the abomination of misery!

Mike McInerney. Look now, Honor. . . . It is what I often heard said, two to be better than one. . . . Sure if you had an old trouser was full of holes . . . or a skirt . . . wouldn't you put another in under it that might be as tattered as itself and the two of them together would make some sort of a decent show?

Mrs. Donohoe. Ah, what are you saying? There is no holes in that suit I brought you now, but as sound it is as the day I spun it for himself.

Mike McInerney. It is what I am thinking, Honor . . . I do be weak an odd time . . . any load I would carry, it preys upon my side . . . and this man does be weak an odd time with the swelling in his knees . . . but the two of us together it's not likely it is at the one time we would fail. Bring the both of us with you, Honor, and the height of the castle of luck on you, and the both of us together will make one good hardy man!

Mrs. Donohoe. I'd like my job! Is it queer in the head you are grown asking me to bring in a stranger off the road?

Michael Miskell. I am not, ma'am, but an old neighbor I am. If I had forecasted this asking I would have asked it myself. Michael Miskell I am, that was in the next house to you in Skehanagh!

Mrs. Donohoe. For pity's sake! Michael Miskell is it? That's worse again. Yourself and Mike that never left fighting and scolding and attacking one another! Sparring at one another like two young pups you were, and threatening one another after like two grown dogs!

Mike McInerney. All the quarreling was ever in the place it was myself did it. Sure his anger rises fast and goes away like the wind. Bring him out with myself now, Honor Donohoe, and God bless you.

Mrs. Donohoe. Well, then, I will not bring him out, and I will not bring yourself out, and you not to learn better sense. Are you making yourself ready to come?

Mike McInerney. I am thinking, maybe . . . it is a mean thing for a man that is shivering into seventy years to go changing from place to place.

Mrs. Donohoe. Well, take your luck or leave it. All I asked was to save you from the hurt and the harm of the year.

Mike McInerney. Bring the both of us with you or I will not stir out of this.

Mrs. Donohoe. Give me back my fine suit so (*Begins gathering up the clothes.*) till I'll go look for a man of my own!

Mike McInerney. Let you go so, as you are so unnatural and so disobliging, and look for some man of your own, God help him! For I will not go with you at all!

Mrs. Donohoe. It is too much time I lost with you, and

dark night waiting to overtake me on the road. Let the two of you stop together, and the back of my hand to you. It is I will leave you there the same as God left the Jews!

(*She goes out. The old men lie down and are silent for a moment.*)

Michael Miskell. Maybe the house is not so wide as what she says.

Mike McInerney. Why wouldn't it be wide?

Michael Miskell. Ah, there does be a good deal of middling poor houses down by the sea.

Mike McInerney. What would you know about wide houses? Whatever sort of a house you had yourself it was too wide for the provision you had in it.

Michael Miskell. Whatever provision I had in my house it was wholesome provision and natural provision. Herself and her periwinkles! Periwinkles is a hungry sort of food.

Mike McInerney. Stop your impudence and your chat or it will be the worse for you. I'd bear with my own father and mother as long as any man would, but if they'd vex me I would give them the length of a rope as soon as another!

Michael Miskell. I would never ask at all to go eating periwinkles.

Mike McInerney (*sitting up*). Have you anyone to fight me?

Michael Miskell (*whimpering*). I have not, only the Lord!

Mike McInerney. Let you leave putting insults on me so, and death picking at you!

Michael Miskell. Sure I am saying nothing at all to displease you. It is why I wouldn't go eating periwinkles, I'm in dread I might swallow the pin.

Mike McInerney. Who in the world wide is asking you to eat them? You're as tricky as a fish in the full tide!

Michael Miskell. Tricky is it! Oh, my curse and the curse of the four and twenty men upon you!

Mike McInerney. That the worm may chew you from skin to marrow bone! (*Seizes his pillow.*)

Michael Miskell (*seizing his own pillow*). I'll leave my death on you, you scheming vagabone!

Mike McInerney. I'll pull out your pin feathers! (*Throwing pillow*)

Michael Miskell (*throwing pillow*). You tyrant! You big bully you!

Mike McInerney (*throwing pillow and seizing mug*). Take this so, you stobbing ruffian you!

(*They throw all within their reach at one another, mugs, prayer books, pipes, etc.*)

CURTAIN

THE UNSEEN

BY

ALICE GERSTENBERG

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CHARACTERS

JEFFRY BALDWIN	
LOIS	His wife
HULDA	A Swedish servant

THE UNSEEN

SCENE: — *A dining-room. Center stands a table;* LOIS *is seated at one end,* JEFFRY *at the other. Enter* HULDA.

Hulda (*placing platter of chopped meat balls on table*). It vas not my fault! You say dees morning, Meeses Baldwin, you say — haf meat balls — dere meat balls — you no say soup!

Lois. That will do, Hulda, that will do, we don't wish to hear another word about it.

Hulda. But I von't haf Meester Baldwin tink I wrong — You no say soup — dees morning — if you order soup, I make soup but —

Jeffry. Stop it! Stop it!

Hulda. All de time — all de time — say keep down bills! I keep down bills — I cook only vat she say — she no say soup —

Lois. But you know I meant to order soup —

Hulda. I can't smell vat you vant — I can't —

Jeffry. That will do! Leave the room!

Lois. Yes, didn't you cook anything else but meat? Haven't you any vegetables?

Hulda. Oh, you make me so mad! (*She goes out back center muttering.*)

Lois. Poor dear Jeffry, — are you awfully hungry? (*Serves meat.*)

Jeffry. You'd better ship her right off. I can't work

all day and come home to food like this — (*Puts fork into meat.*) hard as rocks!

Lois. No one else will come for the small price we pay. We'll have to put up with her!

Jeffry. Send her or lose me, take your choice!

Lois (*teasingly*). Keep her or lose me — take *your* choice! I have a home and a mother.

Jeffry. Well, if it's a case of your mother or keeping Hulda I think we'll keep Hulda.

Hulda (*enters with bowl*). Dees ess de ashpagus.

Lois. Oh, yes, Jeffry, I bought some beautiful green asparagus for you! Why, Hulda, where are the heads?

Hulda. The vat? (*At Lois' left*)

Lois. Why! you've cut off all the heads!

Hulda. Yaas, dey looked too wrinkled.

Lois. Oh, what's the use! Oh, you fool! You've cut off the best part!

Jeffry. Didn't you ever cook asparagus before?

Hulda. Meester Baldwin, I advertise for general housework and for de cooking of potatoes and eggs and ven I cook vat she bring I cook to oblige —

Jeffry (*to Lois*). Why didn't you go into the kitchen yourself and show her? After all it is your job to look after things — you know jolly well, you've been slacking.

Lois. To Mr. Baldwin's left, Hulda. When will you learn which is right and which is left?

Hulda (*looks dazed*). I vas dere for you — (*Points to Lois' left.*) so I come here.

Lois. But my left is his right — go over there —

Jeffry. Really, Lois, I think you might train her in the daytime when I'm not here.

Lois. I've sewing to do and a lot of things! You have no idea how tired I get. I try in every way to save for you and help keep up appearances.

Hulda (*to Jeffry who is having difficulty with the asparagus*). Take dem in your fingers, Meester Baldwin: dat's de way I hold dem in de kitchen.

Lois. Hulda! You must not speak unless you're spoken to!

Hulda (*going out with dish*). Yaas, I no forget again. (*Exit.*)

Lois. Oh, I'm exhausted.

Jeffry. Poor brave little dear! I wish I could give you what other women have, pearls —

Lois. It's all right, Jeffry, you would if you could. Anyway, we have our love.

Hulda (*enters with baked potatoes, which she passes to Jeffry's left*). Potatoes?

Lois. You should pass them to me first, Hulda.

Jeffry (*does not take any*). To Mrs. Baldwin first.

Lois (*as Hulda goes to her right side*). The other side, Hulda.

Jeffry. Lois, I went to Appleton, Kennedy and Company this morning to ask about my designs.

Lois. Oh, what did they say?

Jeffry. They said they were waiting to hear the answer from the New York branch to-day. To-day the New York branch was to make the final decision between the three best designs. Here, Hulda, come back, I want a potato.

Hulda (*who was going out*). Vy, I stood dere before — (*She comes back dazed, not understanding things at all. As*

she does so she tips the plate and a potato rolls on the floor. She scrambles after it, in doing so trips and falls full length, smashing the plate.)

Lois (*begins to cry and laugh hysterically*). Oh, it's just too dreadful! My pretty plate!

Jeffry (*helps Hulda up; sets her up like a waxen image, hands her the fragments of plate, keeps the potato, points her toward the door and pushes her on her way. She goes out automatically. Then he goes to pat Lois*). Never mind, dear, luck's coming our way yet. They told me my design was one of the three they were considering. Mine is one of three!

Lois. Oh, Jeffry! they will take yours! They must see that you are a great architect and only need your chance!

Jeffry. There's a dear! You always do encourage me so! (*Kisses her, remembers baked potato in hand and goes back to his place to eat it.*)

Lois (*goes to sideboard and takes out a large blue-print which she unrolls triumphantly*). When I'm sewing I day-dream about the city you have planned. Look at your blue-prints! Future generations in Western Canada will tell their children how the big railroad made clearings in the forest, how they sent all over the world for plans for the building of a model city, and how Jeffry Baldwin, master architect, won the contest, built the city, and became its first mayor!

Jeffry. You don't stop at anything, do you?

Lois (*spreads blue-print on table*). There is the Court House with your Honor's chair, and up here on the hill, in the very best location, is our new residence.

(*Hulda has come in to remove the plates. She takes Lois' plate and looks sideways at the blue-print.*)

Jeffry (*pointing to print*). There's our garage for the car we have — not yet —

Lois. Do you see the pretty curtains in my window?

(*Hulda thinks they are quite mad; she shakes her head as she can see no curtains; she piles up Jeffry's plates.*)

Jeffry. There's the railroad station. I'm a little proud of that!

Lois. It will make you famous!

Jeffry. And rich!

Lois. Hulda! Don't pile up the dishes like that! This is not a boarding house!

Hulda. Dat's all right, I am strong enough — I von't let dem drop! (*Exit.*)

Jeffry. If I win the contest, I promise you some one better than Hulda; I'll send you to good dressmakers so you may save your own pretty fingers —

Lois. And we'll go to the theater oftener, Jeffry, entertain our friends more — Oh, how soon will they let you know if you have won?

Jeffry. I should receive a telegram to-day.

Lois. A telegram! To-day? Oh, Jeffry, I am sure they will send you one!

Jeffry. In a way I wish I hadn't told you anything about it, —

(*Hulda brings in coffee and finger bowls.*)

Lois. Where's the pie?

Hulda. You no order pie!

Lois. I told you to telephone the bakery —

Hulda. No, you say you telephone the bakery —

Lois. Yes, Hulda, for once you're right. I did forget it. Forgive me, Jeffry, I really didn't think of anything else but my new dress. I want to finish it for Sunday.

Hulda (*looks at Jeffry triumphantly*). You see, Meester Baldwin, I no to blame. (*Exit.*)

Jeffry. Really, Lois, this is quite too much!

Lois. I *am* ashamed of myself —

Jeffry. I wish I hadn't told you about Appleton, Kennedy and Company. I feel as if telling you has spoiled my chances at winning!

Lois. Jeffry, no!

Jeffry. You scatter so! You don't concentrate! And I've been wishing for success so hard!

Lois. So have I! Why, I've been praying for it and praying for it!

Jeffry. Still, it seems to me as soon as we speak of our desires aloud, we start unseen forces in the air to work to thwart them! On the unseen side of life there must be uncanny influences helping or harming us. I feel as if telling you had hurt my chances!

Lois. That's unfair of you! You know I wish you all the luck in the world!

Jeffry. Is there such a thing as luck? Or are we only pawns in the power of unseen gods? I've been unlucky so long I scarcely dare to hope for success.

Lois. Don't get blue! It must come right!

Jeffry. Well, I've some drawings to make for the firm — a rush order — you don't mind, do you, if I clear everything off of the library table?

Lois. Of course not. And I'm going to my room to sew my dress. You'll forgive me, won't you, for giving you such a dreadful dinner?

Jeffry (*kisses her*). Of course, poor dear!

Lois. I really do love you so, Jeffry.

Jeffry. Not more than I do you.

Lois. Now I *know* they've given you the prize. I feel it in my bones!

(*She laughs and goes out right. He goes out left.*)

Hulda (*enters from center carrying a yellow telegram*). Dis telegram yust coom — (*She is surprised that the room is empty.*) Oh, I taught you ver still here. (*The telephone down left rings. Hulda goes to answer it and before she gets there Lois calls from off right, "Hulda, Hulda." Hulda runs toward right to answer Lois, but the telephone rings again and she runs back to it. Lois keeps on calling. Hulda vacillates between Lois and the telephone and finally goes to the 'phone. As the telegram hampers her action with the 'phone she absentmindedly drops it on a side table littered with papers and promptly forgets all about it.*) Halloo, vat you vant? Hold on.

Lois (*off stage*). Hulda, Hulda, I can't find my thimble. What did you do with my thimble?

Hulda. Some von hold on to you.

Lois (*enters*). Did you see my thimble?

Hulda. It roll under bed.

Lois. Why didn't you pick it up?

Hulda. It vas time to make dinner. (*Exit right.*)

Lois (*at 'phone*). Yes? Oh, Mrs. Nichols! Wait till I ask my husband. Jeffry, Jeffry —

Jeffry (*enters from left*). Yes?

Lois (*puts one hand over 'phone*). Mrs. Nichols invites us to dine on Tuesday, shall we accept?

Jeffry. Yes, if you want to —

Lois. But if they take your design you'll have to go right on to New York and —

Jeffry (*cautiously*). Ssh! don't say anything about it. I haven't won yet.

Lois. I'll accept; we can always call it off. (*In 'phone*) Oh, Mrs. Nichols, we shall be very happy to come. Tuesday at seven, yes, thank you.

Jeffry (*goes left*). Don't disturb me again, please, dear.

Lois (*to Hulda who enters from right*). Did you find the thimble?

Hulda. Yaas, here. (*Gives Lois thimble.*)

Lois (*goes right*). Don't stay up too late, Jeffry!

Hulda (*at table center*). Does yous vant pie for breakfast?

Lois (*as she goes out right*). No!

Jeffry (*as he goes out left*). No!!!

Hulda (*clears the table of dishes, muttering to herself*). Vant pie, no vant pie — vant soup — no say soup — vant water — leetle in finger bowls — (*She looks at the finger bowls scornfully and begins to wash the coffee cups in them.*) Ven dey have running all day water in de bath tub. (*She tries to recall the etiquette of service through pantomime.*) I must bring potatoes to her on right side — no, not my right side — her left side — he take potato only ven I pass second time — over der, no, der, run here — run der — go out — coom in — go out — coom in — seven dollar a week — scrub — doost — seven

dollar — get oop at six o'clock — all dark yet — Oh, — (*She rattles off a paragraph of vituperative Swedish.*)

(*The lights go out to suggest the passing of a week.*)

(*They come on again to show Hulda setting the breakfast table. Lois in dressing gown and breakfast cap is helping her.*)

Lois (*runs her finger over sideboard*). I do believe you haven't dusted this room all the week you've been here.

Hulda. I doost —

Jeffry (*enters from back center in dressing gown and carrying the morning newspapers soaked with rain*). It's pouring out! How shall I dry the newspapers?

Lois. Hulda, put them next to the stove. Come, Jeffry, have your breakfast.

Hulda. Put dem in de stove?

Lois. No, not in the stove, next to the stove, over a chair like this!

Hulda. Huh! (*She goes out back center.*)

Jeffry. Her week's up. Does she stay or go?

Lois (*wearily*). I suppose she'll have to stay. I need some one and since there's no luck for us we shall have to keep on struggling the same old way. There's no use in *our* expecting great things!

Jeffry (*disconsolately*). No use at all! I'm just a dub!

Lois. Oh, it wasn't fair of them not to give you the prize, not even to send you any kind of word, no telegram, no letter, nothing! They haven't ever returned your designs!

Jeffry. Oh, they'll send *those* back!

(*Hulda enters center, places a jar of jam on table and begins*

to straighten up the room and dust, slowly working toward the small table littered with papers where she had placed the telegram a week ago.)

Lois. All our wishing and praying didn't help a bit! It's almost made an atheist of me!

Jeffry. I knew I shouldn't have told you I was near winning. The witches in the air are mocking me for being too cocksure!

Lois. The man whose design they took doesn't look half as clever as you do. Look at his picture! (*She takes it from the wall where it has been pinned.*) Every day I've cut out the articles from the paper. "John Parker, winner of contest for building of model city, on the train going to Western Canada with the directors of the road." Oh, it should have been you, Jeffry! *You* should be on that train, you ought to be getting all this publicity. I wonder if the paper has something about them again this morning. Hulda, as soon as the paper is dry, bring it in — Hulda — did you hear what I said — Hulda, — answer me — (*Stamps her foot.*) What is the matter with you?

Hulda (*meanwhile has been dusting and having reached the table and discovered the telegram, now shows facial expression running the gamut of surprise, fear, dumb astonishment. She holds the telegram out stupidly*). Dees come a veek ago.

Jeffry (*snatches telegram*). A week ago?

Lois. A telegram comes a week ago and you deliver it to us now —

Hulda. I veery sorry. It not stay in my head. You

call me — telephone ring — you lose thimble — no pie — I forget — you no order soup — telephone ring — I go der — go here — I find now ven I doost — I —

Jeffry. Can you imagine anything more outrageous! My future ruined — my hopes gone — all because of a numbskull like that!

Lois. Let me see, let me see!

Jeffry (*reads telegram in a rage*). "Jeffry Baldwin: Your plans for city accepted; must see you here at once for conference. Wire reply. If do not hear from you immediately, must favor other contestant who is with us now. Appleton, Kennedy & Co., New York City."

Lois (*seizes telegram*). "Plans accepted — if do not hear from you immediately, must favor other contestant —"

Jeffry. If do not hear from you immediately — a week late! (*He turns on Hulda.*) Do you know what you have done — Oh, I could — (*He goes as if to strike her.*)

Lois. Do you know what you've done — This telegram told Mr. Baldwin he was the winner of an important contest — that he was to answer at once — Oh, to have won and then lost because an outrageous fool like you —

Jeffry. The success of a lifetime — gone in a flash! For years I've studied, worked, slaved! I put my life blood into those designs — all my best hopes! to reach the goal! achievement! and then — like that — (*Snaps his fingers.*) gone!

Hulda (*frightened*). I veery sorry —

Jeffry. You've killed something in me! It was murder!

Hulda. I not keel you — I not —

Lois. Don't you know telegrams are sent to save time — how dared you hold it back!

Hulda. Telephone ring — you call — thimble — pie — soup — all same time —

Lois. Get out or I'll strike you!

Jeffry. Leave this house or I'll throw you out!

Hulda. You send me avay? But I forgot telegram — I not steal telegram —

Lois. Get out, or I'll throw something at you! (*Raises dish from table.*)

(*Hulda dodges out back center.*)

Lois. Oh, my poor Jeffry! (*Goes to him.*)

Jeffry (*flings Lois aside*). Don't touch me! It's *your* fault! I *told* you not to keep a girl like that! You will never listen to what I say! It's all your fault for not ordering the pie!

Lois. The pie had nothing to do with it!

Jeffry. What's a wife supposed to be to a man? Haven't your slack methods ruined my prospects for life?

Lois. I haven't ruined your prospects! I've done my best to skimp and slave to help you in every way. I only kept Hulda because *you* couldn't afford to pay any one else.

Jeffry. We couldn't afford *her*, that's certain! By this time I should have been on the train instead of Parker. I might have lost straight through — but this winning and then losing — what does it mean? There are mad devils in the air mocking me! (*Looks off into space.*) D—— you!

Lois. Jeffry, you're not sane when you say such things! There's nothing in the air!

Jeffry. How do you know our lives are not watched? How do you know but what the spirit of some dead enemy isn't taking revenge?

Lois. That's horrible!

Jeffry. How else can you explain my defeat? Don't I work hard? Am I not sober, honest and careful? Don't I deserve success? What's the matter with me? What have I done to fail?

Lois. It's not *your* fault, Jeffry, it's just Fate against us!

Jeffry. And what's Fate? A spirit hating me? An evil spirit not wanting me to win, made Hulda purposely forget to give me the telegram! Is it fair to have to fight the spirits in the unseen? (*Shakes fist at goblins in air.*) I have strong hands to fight against flesh but I am powerless to fight the influences of the air!

Lois. You're going crazy, be patient.

Jeffry. Patient! I have waited long enough! I don't want success when I'm too old to enjoy it. I want it now while I've still red blood in my veins! I want it now! Do you hear me, you there in the Unseen. I demand success now!

Lois (*sadly*). Perhaps, Jeffry, we must learn not to expect so much.

Jeffry. That's the trouble with you. You never let me go on, you always hold me back — If you had dismissed Hulda as I told you to, this never would have happened. You hinder me at every turn —

Lois (*indignantly*). Hinder you! Indeed! You're

getting help from me all the time. I'm a fool to stay and endure it.

Jeffry. You shouldn't have married me if you weren't willing to stand by me.

Lois. You shouldn't have married me when you didn't have enough to support me.

Jeffry. I wish I had known in time how extravagant you are.

Lois. I'm not extravagant!

Jeffry. You are!

Lois. Do you want me to leave you?

Jeffry. I'm sick of your threats.

Lois. I'm sick of you!

Jeffry. Then we're quits!

Lois. You don't care for me!

Jeffry. You certainly don't care for me!

Lois. I do!

Jeffry. You don't!

Lois. *I* do. *You* don't!

Jeffry. I *do!*

Lois. You *don't!*

Jeffry. *I* do. *You* don't!

Lois. No, I don't! I'm going!

Jeffry (*furiously*). All right, go on!

Lois (*furiously; starts back center*). Good-bye!

Jeffry. Good-bye!

Hulda (*enters back center and Lois has to retreat down stage; wears a ridiculous hat and shawl and carries a dilapidated suit-case and several weird hat-boxes. She holds out the dried newspapers. Lois seizes them*). The newspapers ees dry.

Lois. Get out! I never want to see you again!

Hulda (*looks imploringly at Jeffry*). You vant me to go? You please geeve me vages? I haf noding but a nickel.

Jeffry. Give you wages for ruining my life?

Hulda. Von veek — seven dollar —

Jeffry (*flings money at her*). There! Get out!

Hulda. Tank you. (*She picks up money and boxes to go out center.*)

Lois (*meanwhile has come down stage left reading headlines of paper. She now shrieks*). Jeffry! Jeffry! Floods in Canada! Washed away a bridge! The train with the directors plunged into the river! Parker was *killed.*

Jeffry (*down stage right*). Parker — killed —

Lois. Jeffry, it might have been *you!*

Jeffry. It might have been —

Lois. You're saved!

Jeffry (*in startled realization that it was well that the telegram had not been delivered to him*). Who saved me?

Lois (*half in awe to herself*). The telegram —

Jeffry (*in awe as he gazes out into space where before he had denounced the Unseen*). It must have been an *angel.*

Lois (*in wild delight*). It was Hulda!

Hulda (*turns stupidly*). Huh?

Lois. Hulda, Hulda, come back! You've saved his life. You must stay with us forever!

(*Lois pulls her down stage so that she stands center between Jeffry and Lois.*)

Hulda. Huh!

Jeffry (*exultantly*). Hulda!

Lois (*embracing her*). You saved his life!
Jeffry (*patting her*). Hulda, *you* were the *angel!!!*

(*Hulda does not understand anything beyond the fact that they are friendly to her again. She looks straight ahead with an expression of happy stupidity and gives an idiotic giggle of delight.*)

CURTAIN

SHAM

(A Social Satire)

BY

FRANK G. TOMPKINS

Reprinted from *Modern Plays*, edited by Frank Shay, by special arrangement with the publishers, D. Appleton & Co.

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CHARACTERS

CHARLES	The householder
CLARA	His wife
THE THIEF	
THE REPORTER	

SHAM

SCENE: — *A darkened room.*

(*After a moment the door opens, admitting a streak of light. A man peers in cautiously. As soon as he is sure that the room is unoccupied, he steps inside and feels along the wall until he finds the switch which floods the room with light. He is dressed in impeccable taste — evidently a man of culture. From time to time he bites appreciatively on a ham sandwich as he looks about him, apparently viewing the room for the first time. Nothing pleases him until a vase over the mantel catches his eye. He picks it up, looks at the bottom, puts it down hard, and mutters, "Imitation." Other articles receive the same disdainful verdict. The whole room is beneath his notice. He starts to sit down before the fire and enjoy his sandwich. Suddenly he pauses to listen, looks about him hurriedly for some place to hide, thinks better of it, and takes his stand opposite the door, smiling pleasantly and expectantly. The door opens and a young woman enters with a man at her heels. As she sees the thief she stifles a scream and retreats, backing the man out behind her. The thief smiles and waits. Soon the door opens again, and the man enters with the woman clinging to him. They stand opposite the thief and stare at him, not sure what they ought to say or do.*)

Thief (*pleasantly*). Good evening! (*Pause*) Good evening, good evening. You surprised me. Can't say I

expected you home so soon. Was the play an awful bore? (*Pause*) We-e-ell, can't one of you speak. I CAN carry on a conversation alone, but the question-and-answer method is usually preferred. If one of you will ask me how I do, we might get a step farther.

Clara (*breathlessly*). You — you — (*with growing conviction*) you're a thief!

Thief. Exactly. And you, madame? The mistress of the house, I presume. Or are you another thief? The traditional one that it takes to catch the first?

Clara. This — this is OUR house. Charles, why don't you do something? Don't stand there like a — Make him go away! Tell him he mustn't take anything (*advancing toward the thief and speaking all in one sentence*). What have you taken? Give it to me instantly. How dare you! Charles, take it away from him.

Charles (*apparently not afraid, a little amused, but uncertain what to do, finally adopting the bullying tone*). I say, old man, you'd better clear out. We've come home. You know you can't — come now, give it up. Be sensible. I don't want to use force —

Thief. I don't want you to.

Charles. If you've got anything of ours — We aren't helpless, you know. (*He starts to draw something black and shiny from his overcoat pocket. It might be a pistol, but he does not reveal its shape.*)

Thief. Let's see those glasses. Give them here. (*Takes them from the uncertain Charles.*) Perhaps they're better than mine. Fine cases. (*Tries them.*) Humph! Window glass! Take them back. You're not armed, you know. I threw your revolver down the cold-air shaft.

Never carry one myself — in business hours. Yours was in the bottom of your bureau drawer. Bad shape, those bureau drawers were in. Nice and neat on top; rat's nest below. Shows up your character in great shape, old man. Always tell your man by his bureau drawers. Didn't it ever occur to you that a thief might drop in on you some night? What would he think of you?

Charles. I don't think —

Thief. You should. I said to myself when I opened that drawer: "They put up a great surface, but they're shams. Probably streak that runs through everything they do." You ought to begin with real neatness. This other sort of thing is just a form of dishonesty.

Clara. You! Talking to US about honesty — in our house!

Thief. Just the place for honesty. Begins at home. Let's —

Clara. Charles, I won't stand this! Grab hold of him. Search him. You hold him. I'll telephone.

Thief. You can't.

Clara. You've cut the wires.

Thief. Didn't have to. Your telephone service has been cut off by the company. I found that out before I came. I suspect you neglected the bill. You ought not to, makes no end of trouble. Inconvenienced me this evening. Better get it put in right away.

Clara. Charles, do I have to stand here and be insulted?

Thief. Sit down. Won't you, please! This is your last ham sandwich, so I can't offer you any, but there's plenty of beer in the cellar, if you care for it. I don't recommend it, but perhaps you're used to it.

Clara (*almost crying*). Charles, are you going to let him preach to us all night! I won't have it. Being lectured by a thief!

Charles. You can't stop a man's talking, my dear, especially this sort of man. Can't you see he's a born preacher? Old man, while advice is going round, let me tell you that you've missed your calling. Why don't you go in for reform? Ought to go big.

Clara. Oh, Charles! Don't talk to him. You're a good deal bigger than he is.

Thief. Maybe I'll jiu-jitsu him.

Clara. He's insulting you now, Charles. Please try. I'll hold his feet.

Thief. No doubt you would. But that wouldn't stop my talking. You'd be taking an unfair advantage, too; I couldn't kick a lady, could I? Besides, there are two of you. You leave it to Charles and me. Let's have fair play, at least.

Clara. Fair play? I'd like to know —

Thief. Ple-e-ase, don't screech! My head aches and your voice pierces so. Let's sit down quietly and discuss the situation like well-bred people, and when we've come to some understanding, I'll go.

Clara. Yes, after you've taken everything in the house and criticized everything else you can't take, our manners and our morals.

Charles. But he isn't taking anything now, is he? Let the poor chap criticize, can't you? I don't suppose he often meets his — er — customers socially. He's just dying for a good old visit. Lonesome profession, isn't it, old man?

Clara. If you WON'T do anything, I'll call the neighbors.

Thief. No neighbors to call. Nearest one a block away, and he isn't at home. That comes of living in a fashionable suburb. Don't believe you can afford it, either. WON'T you sit down, madame? I can't till you do. Well, then I shall have to stand, and I've been on my feet all day. It's hardly considerate (*plaintively*). I don't talk so well on my feet, either. It will take me much longer this way. (*Clara bounces into a chair, meaningfully.*) Thank you, that's better. (*Sighs with relief as he sinks into the easy chair.*) I knew I could appeal to your better nature. Have a cigarette? (*Charles accepts one from his beautiful case.*) And you, madame?

Clara (*puts out her hand, but withdraws it quickly*). Thank you, I don't care to smoke — with a thief.

Thief. Right. Better not smoke, anyway. I'm so old-fashioned, I hate to see women smoke. None of the women in my family do it. Perhaps we're too conventional —

Clara. I don't know that I care to be like the women of your family. I *will* have one, if you please. No doubt you get them from a man of taste.

Thief. Your next-door neighbor. This is — was — his case. Exquisite taste. Seen this case often, I suppose? (*He eyes them closely.*) Great friends? Or perhaps you don't move in the same circles. (*Clara glares at him.*) Pardon me. Tactless of me, but how could I guess? Well, here's your chance to get acquainted with his cigarettes. Will you have one now?

Clara. I don't receive stolen goods.

Thief. That's a little hard on Charles, isn't it? He seems to be enjoying his.

Charles. Fine cigarette. Hempsted's a connoisseur. Truth is — we don't know the Hempsteds. They've never called.

Thief. That's right, Charles. Tell the truth and shame (*with a jerk of his head toward Clara*) — you know who.

Clara. Charles, there isn't any reason, I'm sure —

Thief. Quietly, please. Remember my head. I'm sorry, but I must decline to discuss your social prospects with you, and also your neighbors' shortcomings, much as we should all enjoy it. There isn't time for that. Let's get down to business. The question we've got to decide and decide very quickly is, What would you like to have me take?

Clara (*aghast*). What would we — what would we like to have you take? Why — why — you can't take anything now; we're here. Of all the nerve! What would we like —

Thief. It gains by repetition, doesn't it.

Charles. You've got me, old man. I may be slow, but I don't for the moment see the necessity for your taking anything.

Thief. I was afraid of this. I'll have to begin farther back. Look here now, just suppose I go away and don't take anything (*with an air of triumph*). How would you like that?

Charles. Suits me to a "T." How about you, my dear? Think you can be firm and bear up under it?

Thief. Don't be sarcastic. You're too big. Only

women and little men should be sarcastic. Besides, it isn't fair to me, when I'm trying to help you. Here am I, trying to get you out of a mighty ticklish situation, and you go and get funny. It isn't right.

Charles. Beg pardon, old man. Try us in words of one syllable. You see this is a new situation for us. But we're anxious to learn.

Thief. Listen, then. See if you can follow this. Now there's nothing in your house that I want; nothing that I could for a moment contemplate keeping without a good deal of pain to myself.

Clara. We're trying to spare you. But if you care to know, we had the advice of Elsie de Wolfe.

Thief (*wonderingly*). Elsie de Wolfe? Elsie, how could you! Now, if you had asked me to guess, I should have said — the Pullman Company. I shudder to think of owning any of this bric-a-brac myself. But it must be done. Here am I offering to burden myself with something I don't want, wouldn't keep for worlds, and couldn't sell (*growing a little oratorical*). Why do I do this?

Charles. Yes, why do you?

Clara. Hush, Charles; it's a rhetorical question; he wants to answer it himself.

Thief. I do it to accommodate you. Must I be even plainer? Imagine that I go away, refusing to take anything in spite of your protests. Imagine it's to-morrow. The police and the reporters have caught wind of the story. Something has been taken from every house in Sargent Road — except one. The nature of the articles shows that the thief is a man of rare discrimination. To be quite frank — a connoisseur.

Clara. A connoisseur of what? Humph!

Thief. And a connoisseur of such judgment that to have him pass your Rubens[1] by is to cast doubt upon its authenticity. I do not exaggerate. Let me tell you that from the Hempsteds — (*Clara leans forward, all interest.*) — but that would take too long. (*She leans back.*) The public immediately asks, Why did the thief take nothing from 2819 Sargent Road? The answer is too obvious: There is nothing worth taking at 2819 Sargent Road.

Charles (*comprehendingly*). Um-hu-m!

Thief. The public laughs. Worse still, the neighbors laugh. What becomes of social pretensions after that? It's a serious thing, laughter is. It puts anybody's case out of court. And it's a serious thing to have a thief pass you by. People have been socially marooned for less than that. Have I made myself clear? Are you ready for the question? What would you like to have me take?

Charles. Now, old man, I say that's neat. Sure you aren't a lawyer?

Thief. I have studied the law — but not from that side.

Clara. It's all bosh. Why couldn't we claim we'd lost something very valuable, something we'd never had?

Thief (*solemnly*). That's the most shameless proposal I've ever heard. Yes, you could *lie* about it. I can't conceal from you what I think of your moral standards.

Charles. I can't imagine you concealing anything unpleasant.

Clara. It's no worse than —

Thief. Your moral sense is blunted. But I can't

[1] Flemish painter, 1577–1640.

attend to that now. Think of this: Suppose, as I said, I should take nothing and you should publish that barefaced lie, and then I should get caught. Would I shield you? Never. Or suppose I shouldn't get caught. Has no one entered your house since you have been here? Doesn't your maid know what you have? Can you trust her not to talk? No, no, it isn't worth the risk. It isn't even common sense, to say nothing of the moral aspects of the case. Why do people never stop to think of the practical advantages of having things stolen! Endless possibilities! Why, a woman loses a $5 brooch and it's immediately worth $15. The longer it stays lost, the more diamonds it had in it, until she prays God every night that it won't be found. Look at the advertising she gets out of it. And does she learn anything from it? Never. Let a harmless thief appear in her room and she yells like a hyena instead of saying to him, like a sensible woman: "Hands up; I've got you right where I want you; you take those imitation pearls off my dresser and get out of here. If I ever see you or those pearls around here again, I'll hand you over to the police." That's what she ought to say. It's the chance of her life. But unless she's an actress, she misses it absolutely. A thief doesn't expect gratitude, but it seems to me he might at least expect understanding and intelligent coöperation. Here are you facing disgrace, and here am I willing to save you. And what do I get? Sarcasm, cheap sarcasm!

Charles. I beg your pardon, old man. I'm truly sorry. You're just too advanced for us. Clara, there's an idea in it. What do you think?

Clara. It has its possibilities. Now if he'll let me

choose — Isn't there a joker in it somewhere? Let me think. We might let you have something. What do you want?

Thief (*indignantly*). What do I want? I — don't want — anything. Can't you see that? The question is, What do you want me to have? And please be a little considerate. Don't ask me to take the pianola or the ice-box. Can't you make up your minds? Let me help you. Haven't you got some old wedding gifts? Everybody has. Regular white elephants, yet you don't dare get rid of them for fear the donors will come to see you and miss them. A discriminating thief is a godsend. All you have to do is write: "Dear Maude and Fred: Last night our house was broken into, and of course the first thing that was taken was that lovely Roycroft chair you gave us." Or choose what you like. Here's opportunity knocking at your door. Make it something ugly as you please, but something genuine. I hate sham.

Clara. Charles, it's our chance. There's that lovely, hand-carved —

Thief. Stop! I saw it. (*Shuddering*) It has the marks of the machine all over it. Not that. I can't take that.

Clara. Beggars shouldn't be —

Thief. Where's my coat? That settles it.

Clara. Oh, don't go! I didn't mean it. Honestly I didn't. It just slipped out. You mustn't leave us like this —

Thief. I don't have to put up with such —

Clara. Oh, please stay, and take something! Haven't we anything you want? Charles, hold him; don't let

him go. No, that won't do any good. Talk to him —

Charles. Don't be so sensitive, old man. She didn't mean it. You know how those old sayings slip out — just say themselves. She only called you a little beggar anyway. You ought to hear what she calls me sometimes.

Thief. I don't want to. I'm not her husband. And I don't believe she does it in the same way, either. But I'm not going to be mean about this. I'll give you another chance. Trot out your curios.

Charles. How about this? Old luster set of Clara's grandmother's. I'm no judge of such things myself, but if you could use it, take it. Granddad gave it to her when they were sweethearts, didn't he, Clara?

Thief. That! Old luster? That jug won't be four years old its next birthday. Don't lay such things to your grandmother. Have some respect for the dead. If you gave more than $3.98 for it, they saw you coming.

Clara. You don't know anything about it. You're just trying to humiliate us because you know you have the upper hand.

Thief. All right. Go ahead. Take your own risks.

Clara. There's this Sheffield[1] tray?

Thief. No.

Charles. Do you like Wedgwood?[2]

Thief. Yes, where is it? (*Looks at it.*) No.

Clara. This darling hawthorn vase —[3]

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[1] Sheffield plate consists of a silver covering fused on a copper base.

[2] Josiah Wedgwood, most distinguished of English manufacturers of pottery, 1730–1795.

[3] Oriental porcelain decorated with flowering branches.

Thief. Please take it away. It isn't hawthorn.

Charles. I suppose cloisonné —[1]

Thief. If they were any of them what you call them. But they aren't.

Charles. Well, if you'd consider burnt wood. That's a genuine burn.

Thief. Nothing short of cremation would do it justice. Of course I've got to take one of them, if they're all you've got. But honestly, there isn't one genuine thing in this house, except Charles — and — and the ham sandwich.

Clara (*takes miniature from cabinet*). I wonder if you would treasure this as I do. It's very dear to me. It's grandmother —

Thief (*suspiciously*). Grandmother again?

Clara. As a little girl. Painted on ivory. See that quaint old coral necklace. And those adorable yellow curls. And the pink circle comb. Would you like it?

Thief. Trying to appeal to my sympathy. I've a good notion to take it to punish you. I wonder if it IS your grandmother. There isn't the slightest family resemblance. Look here! — it is! — it's a copy of the Selby miniature! Woman, do you know who that IS? It's Harriet Beecher Stowe at twelve. What have you done with my overcoat?

Charles. I give up. Here it is. Clara, that was too bad.

Clara. I wanted to see if he'd know.

Charles. There's no use trying to save us after this. We'll just have to bear the disgrace.

[1] Kloi' zō nā', surface decoration in enamel inlaid between partitions of thin metal strips that form the design.

Thief. Charles, you're a trump! I'll even take that old daub for YOU. Give it to me.

Charles. Wait a minute. You won't have to. Say, Clara, where is that old picture of Cousin Paul? It's just as bad as it pretends to be, if genuineness is all you want.

Thief (*suspiciously*). Who is Cousin Paul? Don't try Daniel Webster on me.

Charles. Cousin of mine. Lives on a farm near Madison, Wisconsin.

Thief. You don't claim the picture is by Sargent or Whistler?[1]

Clara. It couldn't be —

Thief (*ignoring her pointedly*). Do you, Charles?

Charles. Certainly not. It's a water color of the purest water, and almost a speaking likeness.

Thief. I'll take Cousin Paul. Probably he has human interest.

Charles. That's the last thing I should have thought of in connection with Cousin Paul.

Thief. Bring him, but wrapped, please. My courage might fail me if I saw him face to face.

Charles (*leaving room for picture*). Mine always does.

Thief. While Charles is wrapping up the picture, I want to know how you got back so early. Your maid said you were going to the Garrick.

Clara. We told her so. But we went to the moving pictures.

[1] John Singer Sargent, American portrait painter, 1856–1925. James A. M'Neill Whistler, American painter and etcher who lived in England, 1834–1903.

Thief. You ought not to go to the movies. It will destroy your literary taste and weaken your minds.

Clara. I don't care for them myself, but Charles won't see anything else.

Thief. You ought to make him. Men only go to the theater anyway because their wives take them. They'd rather stay at home or play billiards. You have a chance right there. Charles will go where you take him. By and by he will begin to like it. Now to-night there was a Granville Barker show at the Garrick, and you went to the movies.

Charles (*entering, doing up picture*). Silly old films, anyway. But Clara *will* go. Goes afternoons when I'm not here, and then drags me off again in the evening. Here's your picture, as soon as I get it tied up. Can't tell you how grateful we are. Shall we make it unanimous, Clara?

Clara. I haven't the vote, you know. Clumsy! give me the picture.

Thief. Don't try to thank me. If you'll give up this shamming I'll feel repaid for my time and trouble (*looking at watch*). By Jove! it's far too much time. I must make tracks this minute. I'll feel repaid if you'll take my advice about the theater for one thing, and — why don't you bundle all this imitation junk together and sell it and get one genuine good thing?

(*Clara leaves, apparently for more string.*)

Charles. Who'd buy them?

Thief. There must be other people in the world with taste as infallibly bad as yours.

Charles. Call that honest?

Thief. Certainly. I'm not telling you to sell them as relics. You couldn't in the first place, except to a home for the aged and indigent blind. But I know a man who needs them. They'd rejoice his heart. They'd be things of beauty to him. I wish I could help you pick out something with your money. But I don't dare risk seeing you again.

Clara (*re-entering, with the picture tied*). Why not? There's honor among thieves.

Thief. There *is*. If you were thieves, I'd know just how far to trust you. Now, I'd be willing to trust Charles as man to man. Gentleman's agreement. But (*looking at Clara*) I don't know —

Charles. Clara is just as honest as we are — with her own class. But your profession puts you outside the pale with her; you're her natural enemy. You haven't any rights. But you've been a liberal education for us both.

Thief. I've been liberal. You meet me — listen! — there are footsteps on the porch. I — I've waited too long. Here I've stood talking —

Charles. Well, stop it now, can't you. I don't see how you've ever got anywhere. Hide!

Thief. No, it can't be done. If you'll play fair, I'm safe enough here in this room, safer than anywhere else. Pretend I'm a friend of yours. You will? Gentleman's agreement? (*He shakes hands with Charles.*)

Charles. Gentleman's agreement. My word of honor.

Clara (*offers her hand as Charles starts for the door*). Gentleman's agreement, but only in this. I haven't

forgiven you for what you've said. If I ever get you in a tight place — look out.

Thief (*taking her hand*). Don't tell more than the one necessary lie. It's so easy to get started in that sort of thing. Stick to it that I'm a friend of the family and that I've been spending the evening.

Clara. I'll try to stick to that. But can't I improvise a little? It's such fun!

Thief. Not a bit. Not one little white lie.

Charles (*entering with a young man behind him*). It's a man from the *News*. He says he was out here on another story and he's got a big scoop. There's been some artistic burglary in the neighborhood and he's run onto it. I told him we hadn't lost anything and that we don't want to get into the papers; but he wants us to answer a few questions.

Reporter. Please do. I need some stuff about the neighborhood.

Clara. I don't know, Charles, but that it's our duty. (*She smiles wickedly at the thief.*) Something we say may help catch the thieves. Perhaps we owe it to law and order.

Reporter. That's right. Would you object if I used your name?

(*Charles and the thief motion to Clara to keep still, but throughout the rest of the conversation she disregards their frantic signals, and sails serenely on.*)

Clara. I don't know that we should mind if you mention us nicely. Will the Hempsteds be in? I shan't mind it, if they don't.

Reporter. Good for you. Now, have you —

Clara. We *have* missed something. We haven't had time to look thoroughly, but we do know that one of our pictures is gone.

(*The men are motioning to her, but she goes on sweetly.*)

Reporter. A-a-ah! Valuable picture. He hasn't taken anything that wasn't best of its class. Remarkable chap. Must be the same one that rifled the Pierpont collection of illuminated manuscripts. Culled the finest pieces without a mistake.

Thief (*interested*). He made one big mistake. He — (*Stops short.*)

Reporter. Know the Pierponts?

Thief. Er — ye-es. I've been in their house. (*Retires from the conversation. Clara smiles.*)

Reporter. Well, believe me, if he's taken anything, your reputation as collectors is made. Picture, eh? Old master, I suppose?

Clara. A family portrait. We treasured it for that. Associations, you know.

Reporter. Must have been valuable, all right. Depend on him to know. He don't run away with any junk. Who was the artist?

Clara. We don't know — definitely.

Reporter. Never heard it attributed to anybody?

Clara. We don't care to make any point of such things. But there have been people who have thought — it was not — a — a Gilbert Stuart.[1]

Charles. Clara!

[1] American portrait painter, 1755–1828.

Clara. I don't know much about such things myself. But our friend, (*Nods toward the thief.*) Mr. — Mr. Hibbard — who has some reputation as a collector, has always said that it was — not. In spite of that fact, he had offered to take it off our hands.

Charles. Clara, you're going too far —

Reporter. She's quite right. You're wrong, Mr. Hibbard. You may be good, but this fellow KNOWS. Too bad you didn't take it while the taking was good. This fellow never sells. Of course he can't exhibit. Just loves beautiful things. No, sir, it was real.

Thief (*between his teeth*). It wasn't. Of all the —

Clara (*smiling*). You take your beating so ungracefully, Mr. Hibbard. The case, you see, is all against you.

Thief. Be careful. The picture may be found at any minute. Don't go too far.

Clara. I hardly think it will be found unless the thief is caught. And I have such perfect confidence in his good sense that I don't expect that.

Reporter. Lots of time for a getaway. When was he here?

Clara. He was gone when we came from the theater. But we must almost have caught him. Some of our finest things were gathered together here on the table ready for his flight. How he must have hated to leave them, all the miniatures and the cloisonné. I almost feel sorry for him.

Charles. I do.

Clara. You see, we went to the Garrick for the Granville Barker show. Mr. Hibbard took us. (*She smiles*

sweetly at him.) I'm devoted to the best in drama and I always insist that Charles and Mr. Hibbard shall take me only to the finest things. And now we come home to find our — You're sure it was a Gilbert. Stuart? — gone.

Thief. I've got to be getting out of here! Can't stay a minute longer! Charles, I wish you luck in that reform we were speaking of, but I haven't much hope. (*Looking at Clara*) There is such a thing as total depravity. Oh, here! (*Taking package from under his arm*) What am I thinking of? I was running away with your package. (*Hands it to Clara.*)

Clara (*refusing it*). Oh, but it's yours, Mr. Hibbard. I couldn't think of taking it. Really, you must keep it to remember us by. Put it among your art treasures at home, next to your lovely illuminated manuscripts, and whenever you look at it remember us and this delightful evening, from which we are all taking away so much. You must keep it — that's part of the bargain, isn't it? And now are we even?

Thief. Even? Far from it. I yield you your woman's right to the last word, and I admit it's the best. (*Stoops and kisses her hand.*) Good-night, Clara. (*To the reporter*) May I give you a lift back to town?

Reporter. Thanks. As far as the Hempsteds' corner. Good-night. Thank you for this much help. (*Exeunt.*)

Charles. Thank goodness, they've gone. What relief! That pace is too rapid for me. You had me running round in circles. But he's got the picture, and we're safe at last. But don't you think, Clara, you took some awful risks. You goaded him pretty far.

Clara. I had to. Did you hear him call me Clara?

Charles. He had to (*chuckling*). He doesn't know our name. But he wasn't a bad fellow, was he? I couldn't help liking him in spite of his impudence.

Clara. You showed it. You took sides with him against me all the time the reporter was here. But, you know, he was right about our house. It's all wrong. The Hempsteds would see it in a minute. I believe I'll clear out this cabinet and have this room done over in mahogany.

Charles. Too expensive this winter.

Clara. Birch will do just as well — nobody knows the difference. Listen! is he coming back?

Reporter (*in the doorway*). Excuse me — listen. Mr. Hibbard says you've given him the wrong package. He says you need this to go with the picture of your grandmother. And he says, sir, that you need to get wise to your own family. He's waiting for me. Good-night! (*Exit.*)

Charles (*angrily*). Get wise to my own family? He may know all about art (*undoing the picture*), but I guess I know my own relatives. (*Holds up picture so that audience can see it, but he can't.*) And if that isn't a picture of my own cousin Paul, I'll eat — (*Sees Clara laughing. Looks at picture, which represents George Washington.*) Clara! you did that! (*Laughs uproariously.*) You little cheat!

CURTAIN

CONFESSIONAL

(A Play in One Act)

BY

PERCIVAL WILDE

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CHARACTERS

ROBERT BALDWIN	
MARTHA	His wife
JOHN	His son
EVIE	His daughter
MARSHALL	
A MAID	

THE SCENE: At Baldwin's.

CONFESSIONAL

(*It is a rather hot and sultry Sunday afternoon, and the sun overhead and the baked clay under foot are merciless. In the distance, lowering clouds give promise of coming relief. And at the parlor window of a trim little cottage the Baldwin family is anxiously awaiting the return of its head.*

JOHN, *the son, an average young man of twenty-seven, is smoking a pipe as philosophically as if this day were in no whit more momentous than any other. But his mother, trying to compose herself with her knitting, has made little progress in the last half hour; and* EVIE, *his sister, takes no pains to conceal her nervousness.*

There is a tense pause. It seems as if none of them likes to break the silence. For the tenth time in ten minutes, Evie goes to the window and looks out along the sultry road.)

Martha. It's time he was home.

Evie. Yes, mother.

Martha. I do hope he hasn't forgotten his umbrella: he has such a habit of leaving it behind him ——

Evie. Yes, mother.

Martha. It might rain. Don't you think so, Evie? (*Without waiting for an answer she goes to the window and looks out anxiously.*) The sky is so dark. (*She starts.*) There was a flash of lightning! (*John rises slowly, moves to a center table, and knocks the ashes out of his pipe. His*

mother turns to him.) John, run into your father's room and see that the windows are closed. There's a good boy.

John. Right-o. (*He goes.*)

Evie (*after a pause*). Mother. (*There is no answer.*) Mother! (*Mrs. Baldwin turns slowly.*) What does Mr. Gresham want with him? Has he done anything wrong?

Martha (*proudly*). Your father? No, Evie.

Evie. Then why did Mr. Gresham send for him?

Martha. He wanted to talk to him.

Evie. What about? Mr. Gresham has been arrested: they're going to try him to-morrow. What can he want with father?

Martha. Your father will have to testify.

Evie. But he's going to testify *against* Mr. Gresham. Why should Mr. Gresham want to see him?

Martha. I don't know, Evie. You know, your father doesn't say much about his business affairs. (*She pauses.*) *I* didn't know there was anything wrong with the bank until I saw it in the papers. Your father wouldn't tell me to draw my money out — he thought it wasn't loyal to Mr. Gresham. (*Evie nods.*) I did it of my own accord — against his wishes — when I suspected ——

Evie (*after a pause*). Do you think that father had anything to do with — with —— (*She does not like to say it.*)

Martha. With the wrecking of the bank? You know him better than that, Evie.

Evie. But did he know what was going on? You know what the papers are saying ——

Martha. They haven't been fair to him, Evie.

Evie. Perhaps not. But they said he must have been

a fool not to know. They said that only he could have known — he and Mr. Gresham. Why didn't he stop it?

Martha. He was acting under Mr. Gresham's orders.

Evie (*contemptuously*). Mr. Gresham's orders! Did he have to follow them?

Martha (*after a pause*). Evie, I don't believe your father ever did a wrong thing in his life — not if he knew it was wrong. He found out by accident — found out what Mr. Gresham was doing.

Evie. How do you know that?

Martha. I don't know it: I suspect it — something he said. (*Eagerly*) You see, Evie, he *can't* have done anything wrong. They haven't indicted him.

Evie (*slowly*). No. They didn't indict him — because they want him to testify against Mr. Gresham. That's little consolation, mother.

(*John re-enters.*)

Martha (*seizing the relief*). Were the windows open, John?

John (*shortly*). I've closed them. (*He crosses to the table, takes up his pipe, and refills it.*) Look here, mater: what does Gresham want with the governor?

Evie (*nodding*). I've just been asking that.

Martha. I don't know, John.

John. Didn't you ask him? (*As she does not answer*) Well?

Martha. Yes, I asked him. He didn't say, John. (*Anxiously*) I don't think he knew himself.

John (*after an instant's thought*). I was talking to the assistant cashier yesterday.

Evie. Donovan?

John. Yes, Donovan. I saw him up at the Athletic Club. He said that nobody had any idea that there was anything wrong until the crash came. Donovan had been there eight years. He thought he was taken care of for the rest of his life. He had gotten married on the strength of it. And then, one morning, there was a sign up on the door. It was like a bolt out of a clear sky.

Evie. And father?

John. He says the governor must have known. He'll swear nobody else did. You see, father was closer to Gresham than anyone else. That puts him in a nice position, doesn't it?

Martha. What do you mean, John?

John. The governor the only witness against John Gresham — and me named after him! John Gresham Baldwin, at your service!

Martha. Your father will do his duty, John, no matter what comes of it.

John (*shortly*). I know it. And I'm not sure but what it's right. (*They look at him inquiringly.*) There's John Gresham, grown rich in twenty years, and the governor pegging along as his secretary at sixty dollars a week!

Martha. Your father never complained.

John. No; that's just the pity of it. He didn't complain. Well, he'll have his chance to-morrow. He'll go on the stand, and when he's through, they'll put John Gresham where he won't be able to hurt anybody for a while. Wasn't satisfied with underpaying his employés: had to rob his depositors! Serves him jolly well right!

Martha (*rather timidly*). I don't think your father would like you to talk that way, John.

John (*shrugs his shoulders with a contemptuous:* "Humph!")

Martha. Your father has nothing against Mr. Gresham. He will tell the truth — nothing but the truth.

John. Did you think I expected him to lie? Not father! He'll tell the truth: just the truth. It'll be plenty!

Evie (*at the window*). There's father now!

(*There is the click of a latchkey outside. Evie makes for the door.*)

Martha. Evie! You stay here: let me talk to him first. (*Martha hurries out. John and Evie look at each other.*)

John. Wonder what Gresham had to say to him? (*Evie shrugs her shoulders. He turns away to the window.*) It's started to rain.

Evie. Yes.

(*There is a pause. Suddenly John crosses to the door, and flings it open.*)

John. Hello, dad!

Baldwin (*coming in, followed by Martha*). How are you, my boy? (*He shakes hands with John.*) Evie! (*He kisses her.*)

Martha. You are sure your shoes aren't wet, Robert?

Baldwin (*shaking his head*). I took the car. Not a drop on me. See? (*He passes his hands over his sleeves. He goes to a chair: sits. There is an awkward pause.*)

John. Well, dad? Don't you think it's about time you told us something?

Baldwin. Told you something? I don't understand, John.

John. People have been talking about you — saying things ——

Baldwin. What kind of things, John?

John. You can imagine: rotten things. And I couldn't contradict them.

Baldwin. Why not, John?

John. Because I didn't know.

Baldwin. Did you *have* to know? Wasn't it enough that you knew your father?

John (*after a pause*). I beg your pardon, sir.

Baldwin. It was two days before the smash-up that I found out what Gresham was doing. (*He pauses. They are listening intently.*) I told him he would have to make good. He said he couldn't ——

Evie (*as he does not continue*). And what happened?

Baldwin. I told him he would have to do the best he could — and the first step would be to close the bank. He didn't want to do that.

Martha. But he did it.

Baldwin. I made him do it. He was angry — very angry, but I had the whip hand.

Evie. The papers didn't mention that.

Baldwin. I didn't think it was necessary to tell them.

Martha. But you let your name rest under a cloud meanwhile.

Baldwin. It will be cleared to-morrow, won't it? (*He pauses.*) To-day Gresham sent for me. The trial begins

in twenty-four hours. I'm the only witness against him. He asked — you can guess what ——

John (*indignantly*). He wanted you to lie to save his skin, eh? Wanted you to perjure yourself?

Baldwin. That wouldn't be necessary, John. He just wanted me to have an attack of poor memory. If I tell all I know, John Gresham will go to jail — no power on earth can save him from it. But he wants me to forget a little — just the essential things. When they question me I can answer "I don't remember." They can't prove I *do* remember. And there you are.

John. It would be a lie, dad!

Baldwin (*smiling*). Of course. But it's done every day. And they couldn't touch *me* — any more than they could convict him.

Martha (*quivering with indignation*). How dared he — how dared he ask such a thing ——!

Evie. What did you say, father?

Baldwin (*smiling, and raising his eyes to John's*). Well, son, what would *you* have said?

John. I'd have told him to go to the devil!

Baldwin (*nodding*). I did.

John. Good for you, governor!

Martha (*half to herself*). I knew! I knew!

Baldwin. I didn't use your words, John. He's too old a friend of mine for that. But I didn't mince matters any. He understood what I meant.

Evie. And what did he say then?

Baldwin. There wasn't much to say. You see, he wasn't surprised. He's known me for thirty-five years, and, well, (*with simple pride*) anybody who's known me

for thirty-five years doesn't expect me to haggle with my conscience. If it had been anybody else than John Gresham I would have struck him across the face. But John Gresham and I were boys together. We worked side by side. And I've been in his employ ever since he started in for himself. He is desperate — he doesn't know what he is doing — or he wouldn't have offered me money.

John (*furious*). Offered you money, dad?

Baldwin. He'd put it aside, ready for the emergency. If they don't convict him, he'll hand it over to me. The law can't stop him. But if I live until to-morrow night, they *will* convict him! (*He sighs.*) God knows I want no share in bringing about his punishment —— (*He breaks off. Evie pats his hand silently.*) Young man and old man, I've worked with him or for him the best part of my life. I'm loyal to him — I've always been loyal to him — but when John Gresham ceases to be an honest man, John Gresham and I part company!

Martha (*weeping softly*). Robert! Robert!

Baldwin. I've got only a few years to live, but I'll live those as I've lived the rest of my life. I'll go to my grave clean! (*He rises presently, goes to the window, and looks out.*) The rain's stopped, hasn't it?

Evie (*following him and taking his hand*). Yes, father.

Baldwin. It'll be a fine day to-morrow.

(*There is a pause.*)

John. Dad.

Baldwin. Yes?

John. What did Gresham offer you?

Baldwin (*simply*). A hundred thousand dollars.

Evie. What!

Martha. Robert!

Baldwin. He put it aside for me without anybody knowing it. It's out of his private fortune, he says. It's not the depositors' money — as if that made any difference.

Evie (*as if hypnotized*). He offered you a hundred thousand dollars?

Baldwin (*smiling at her amazement*). I could have had it for the one word "Yes" — or even for nodding my head — or a look of the eyes.

John. How — how do you know he meant it?

Baldwin. His word is good.

John. Even now?

Baldwin. He never lied to me, John. (*He pauses.*) I suppose my eyes must have shown something I didn't feel. He noticed it. He unlocked a drawer and *showed* me the hundred thousand.

John. In cash?

Baldwin. In thousand-dollar bills. They were genuine: I examined them.

Evie (*slowly*). And for that he wants you to say, "I don't remember."

Baldwin (*smiling*). Just that: three words only.

John. But you won't?

Baldwin (*shaking his head*). Those three words would choke me if I tried to speak them. For some other men, perhaps, it would be easy. But for me? All of my past would rise up and strike me in the face. It would mean to the world that for years I had been living a lie: that I was not the honorable man I thought I was. When John Gresham offered me money, I was angry. But

when I rejected it, and he showed no surprise, then I was pleased. It was a compliment, don't you think so?

John (*slowly*). Rather an expensive compliment.

Baldwin. Eh?

John. A compliment which cost you a hundred thousand dollars.

Baldwin. A compliment which was *worth* a hundred thousand dollars. I've never had that much money to spend in my life, John, but if I had I couldn't imagine a finer way to spend it.

John (*slowly*). Yes. I suppose so.

Martha (*after a pause*). Will the depositors lose much, Robert?

Baldwin (*emphatically*). The depositors will not lose a cent.

Evie (*surprised*). But the papers said ——

Baldwin (*interrupting*). They had to print something: they guessed. *I* know. *I* tell you.

Martha. But you never said so before.

Baldwin. I left that for Gresham. It will come out to-morrow.

John. Why to-morrow? Why didn't you say so before? The papers asked you often enough.

Baldwin. Nothing forced me to answer, John.

John. That wasn't your real reason, was it, dad? You knew the papers would keep right on calling you names. (*Baldwin does not answer. John's face lights up with sudden understanding.*) You wanted to let Gresham announce it himself: because it will be something in his favor! Eh?

Baldwin. Yes. . . . We were able to save something from the wreck, Gresham and I. It was more than I had

expected — almost twice as much — and with what Gresham has it will be enough.

Evie. Even without the hundred thousand?

(*Baldwin does not answer.*)

John (*insistently*). Without the money that Gresham had put away for you?

Baldwin. Yes. I didn't know there *was* the hundred thousand until to-day. Gresham didn't tell me. We reckoned without it.

Evie. Oh!

John. And you made both ends meet?

Baldwin. Quite easily. (*He smiles.*) Marshall is running the reorganization; Marshall of the Third National. He hasn't the least idea that it's going to turn out so well.

(*There is a pause.*)

John. They're going to punish Gresham, aren't they?

Baldwin. I'm afraid so.

John. What for?

Baldwin. Misappropriating the funds of the ——

John (*interrupting*). Oh, I know that. But what *crime* has he committed?

Baldwin. That's a crime, John.

Evie. But if nobody loses anything by it?

Baldwin. It's a crime nevertheless.

John. And they're going to *punish* him for it!

Baldwin. They can't let him go, John. He's too conspicuous.

John. Do you think that's right, governor?

Baldwin. *My* opinion doesn't matter, John.

John. But what do you think?

Baldwin. I think — I think that I'm sorry for John Gresham — terribly sorry.

John (*slowly*). It's nothing but a technicality, dad. Nobody loses a cent. It's rather hard on Gresham, I say.

Baldwin (*after a pause*). Yes, John.

Evie (*timidly*). Would it be such an awful thing, father, if you let him off?

Baldwin (*smiling*). I wish I could, Evie. But I'm not the judge.

Evie. No, but ——

Baldwin. But what?

Evie. You're the only witness against him.

Baldwin (*nonplused*). Evie!

John. She's right, governor.

Baldwin. You too, John?

John. It's going to be a nasty mess if they put John Gresham in jail — with your own son named after him! It's going to be pleasant for *me!* John Gresham Baldwin!

Martha (*after a pause*). Robert, I'm not sure I understood what you said before. What did Mr. Gresham want you to do for him?

Baldwin. Get him off to-morrow.

Martha. You could do that?

Baldwin. Yes.

Martha. How?

Baldwin. By answering "I don't remember" when they ask me dangerous questions.

Martha. Oh! And you *do* remember?

Baldwin. Yes. Nearly everything.

John. No matter what they ask you?

Baldwin. I can always refresh my memory. You see, I have notes.

John. But without those notes you wouldn't remember?

Baldwin. What do you mean, John?

John (*without answering*). As a matter of fact, you will have to rely on your notes nearly altogether, won't you?

Baldwin. Everybody else does the same thing.

John. Then it won't be far from the truth if you say "I don't remember"?

Martha. I don't see that Mr. Gresham is asking so much of you.

Baldwin. Martha!

Martha. Robert, I'm as honorable as you are ——

Baldwin. That goes without saying, Martha.

Martha. It doesn't seem right to me to send an old friend to jail. (*As he speaks she holds up her hand.*) Now don't interrupt me! I've been thinking. The day John was baptized: when Mr. Gresham stood sponsor for him: how proud we were! And when we came home from the church you said — do you remember what you said, Robert?

Baldwin. No. What was it?

Martha. You said, "Martha, may our son always live up to the name which we have given him!" Do you remember that?

Baldwin. Yes — dimly.

John. Ha! Only *dimly*, governor?

Baldwin. What do you mean, John?

Martha (*giving John no opportunity to answer*). It

would be sad — very sad — if the name of John Gresham, our son's name, should come to grief through you, Robert.

Baldwin (*after a pause*). Martha, are you telling me to accept the bribe money that John Gresham offered me?

Evie. Why do you call it bribe money, father?

Baldwin (*bitterly*). Why indeed? Gresham had a prettier name for it. He said that he had underpaid me all these years. You know, I was getting only sixty dollars a week when the crash came ——

John (*impatiently*). Yes, yes?

Baldwin. He said a hundred thousand represented the difference between what he had paid me and what I had actually been worth to him.

Martha. That's no less than true, Robert. You've worked for him very faithfully.

Baldwin. He said that if he had paid me what he should have, I would have put by more than a hundred thousand by now.

John. That's so, isn't it, dad?

Baldwin. Who knows? I never asked him to raise my salary. When he raised it it was of his own accord. (*There is a pause. He looks around.*) Well, what do you think of it, Evie?

Evie (*hesitantly*). If you go on the stand to-morrow ——

Baldwin. Yes?

Evie. And they put John Gresham in jail, what will people say?

Baldwin. They will say I have done my duty, Evie; no more and no less.

Evie. Will they?

Baldwin. Why, what should they say?

Evie. I don't think so, of course, but other people might say that you had turned traitor to your best friend.

Baldwin. You don't mean that, Evie?

Evie. When they find out that they haven't lost any money — when John Gresham tells them that he will pay back every cent — then they won't *want* him to go to jail. They'll feel sorry for him.

Baldwin. Yes, I believe that. I hope so.

John. And they won't feel too kindly disposed towards the man who helps put him in jail.

Martha. They'll say you went back on an old friend, Robert.

John. When you pull out your notes in court, to be *sure* of sending him to jail ——! (*He breaks off with a snort.*)

Evie. And Mr. Gresham hasn't done anything really wrong.

John. It's a technicality, that's what it is. Nobody loses a cent. Nobody wants to see him punished.

Evie. Except you, father.

John. Yes. And you're willing to jail the man after whom you named your son!

Martha (*after a pause*). I believe in being merciful, Robert.

Baldwin. Merciful?

Martha. Mr. Gresham has always been very good to you.

(*There is another pause. Curiously enough, they do not seem to be able to meet each other's eyes.*)

Martha. Ah, well! What are you going to do now, Robert?

Baldwin. What do you mean?

Martha. You have been out of work since the bank closed.

Baldwin (*shrugging his shoulders*). Oh, I'll find a position.

Martha (*shaking her head*). At your age ——?

Baldwin. It's the *man* that counts.

Martha. Yes. You said that a month ago.

John. I heard from Donovan ——

Baldwin (*quickly*). What did you hear?

John. He's gone with the Third National, you know.

Baldwin. Yes; he's helping with the reorganization.

John. They wouldn't take you on there ——

Baldwin. Their staff was full. They couldn't very well offer me a position as a clerk.

John. That was what they told *you.*

Baldwin. Wasn't it true?

John (*shakes his head*). Marshall said he wouldn't employ a man who was just as guilty as John Gresham.

Baldwin. But I'm not!

John. Who knows it?

Baldwin. Everybody will to-morrow!

John. Will they believe you? Or will they think you're trying to save your *own* skin?

Baldwin. I found out only a day before the smash.

John. Who will believe that?

Baldwin. They will *have* to!

John. How will you make them? I'm afraid you'll find that against you wherever you go, governor. Your testifying against John Gresham won't make things any better. If you ever get another job, it will be with *him!*

(*This is a startling idea to Baldwin, who shows his surprise.*) If Gresham doesn't go to jail, he'll start in business again, won't he? And he can't offer you anything less than a partnership.

Baldwin. A partnership?

John (*with meaning*). With the hundred thousand capital you could put in the business, dad.

Baldwin. John!

John. Of course, the capital doesn't matter. He'll owe you quite a debt of gratitude besides.

(*There is a pause.*)

Martha. A hundred thousand would mean a great deal to us, Robert. If you don't find a position soon John will have to support us.

John. On thirty dollars a week, dad.

Evie. That won't go very far.

Martha. It's not fair to John.

John (*angrily*). Oh, don't bother about *me.*

(*Evie begins to weep.*)

John. Look here, governor, you've said nothing to the papers. If you say nothing more to-morrow what does it amount to but sticking to your friend? It's the square thing to do — he'd do as much for you.

Baldwin (*looks appealingly from one face to another. They are averted. Then:*) You — you want me to take this money? (*There is no answer.*) Say "Yes," one of you. (*Still no answer*) Or "No." (*A long pause. Finally*) I couldn't go into partnership with Gresham.

Martha (*promptly*). Why not?

Baldwin. People wouldn't trust him.

John. Then you could go into business with someone else, dad. A hundred thousand is a lot of money.

Baldwin (*walks to the window. Looks out*). God knows I never thought this day would come! I know — I know no matter how you try to excuse it — I know that if I take this money I do a dishonorable thing. And you know it! You, and you, and you! All of you! Come, admit it!

John (*resolutely*). Nobody'll ever hear of it.

Baldwin. But amongst ourselves, John! Whatever we are to the world, let us be honest with each other, the four of us! Well? (*His glance travels from John to Evie, whose head is bowed; from her to his wife, who is apparently busied with her knitting. He raises Martha's head: looks into the eyes. He shudders.*) Shams! Liars! Hypocrites! Thieves! And I no better than any of you! We have seen our souls naked, and they smell to Almighty Heaven! Well, why don't you answer me?

Martha (*feebly*). It's not wrong, Robert.

Baldwin. It's not right.

John (*facing him steadily*). A hundred thousand is a lot of money, dad.

Baldwin (*nodding slowly*). You can look into my eyes *now*, my son, can't you?

John (*without moving*). Dad: why did you refuse? Wasn't it because you were afraid of what *we'd* say?

Baldwin (*after a long pause*). Yes, John.

John. Well, nobody will ever know it.

Baldwin. Except the four of us.

John. Yes — father.

"Well, why don't you answer me?"

(*Abruptly they separate. Evie weeps in silence. Martha, being less emotional, blows her nose noisily, and fumbles with her knitting. John, having nothing better to do, scowls out of the window, and Baldwin, near the fireplace, clenches and unclenches his hands.*)

John. Someone's coming.

Martha (*raising her head*). Who is it?

John. I can't see. (*With sudden apprehension.*) It looks like Marshall.

Baldwin. Marshall?

(*The door-bell rings. They are motionless as a* MAID *enters at one side and goes out the other. The Maid re-enters.*)

The Maid. A gentleman to see you, sir.

Baldwin (*pulling himself together*). Who, me?

The Maid. Yes sir. (*She hands him a card on a salver.*)

Baldwin. It *is* Marshall.

Martha. The President of the Third National?

Baldwin. Yes. What does he want here?

The Maid. Shall I show him in, sir?

Baldwin. Yes. Yes. By all means.

(*The Maid goes out.*)

Martha (*crossing to him quickly*). Robert! Be careful of what you say: you're to go on the stand to-morrow.

Baldwin (*nervously*). Yes, yes. I'll look out.

(*The Maid re-enters, opening the door for* MARSHALL.)

Marshall (*coming into the room very buoyantly*). Well, well, spending the afternoon indoors? How are you,

Mrs. Baldwin? (*He shakes hands cordially.*) And you, Baldwin?

Martha. We were just going out. Come, Evie.

Marshall. Oh, you needn't go on my account. You can hear what I have to say. (*He turns to the head of the family.*) Baldwin, if you feel like coming around to the Third National some time this week, you'll find a position waiting for you.

Baldwin (*thunderstruck*). Do you mean that, Mr. Marshall?

Marshall (*smiling*). I wouldn't say it if I didn't. (*He continues more seriously.*) I was in to see Gresham this afternoon. He told me about the offer he had made you. But he knew that no amount of money would make you do something you thought wrong. Baldwin, he paid you the supreme compliment: rather than go to trial with you to testify against him, he confessed.

Baldwin (*sinking into a chair*). Confessed!

Marshall. Told the whole story. (*He turns to Martha.*) I can only say to you what every man will be saying to-morrow: how highly I honor and respect your husband! How sincerely ——

Martha (*seizing his hand piteously*). Please! Please! Can't you see he's crying?

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY

DUST OF THE ROAD

BY

KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN

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CHARACTERS

PETER STEELE
PRUDENCE STEELE
AN OLD MAN
A TRAMP

DUST OF THE ROAD

The time is about one o'clock of a Christmas morning in the early seventies. The place is the living-room of a comfortable and fairly prosperous Middle Western farmer. At the right as you face the stage is a fireplace with a glowing fire in it. Beside the fire is a large armchair in which PRUDENCE *is sitting. At her elbow is a small table with a lighted lamp, having a shade of green tin. At the left is a door going into other parts of the house; at the back center a door going outside. There is a larger table at left center near the front of the stage. There is also a lighted lamp on this table, but the back of the stage is in semi-darkness. Near the outside door is a window, the curtains of which are drawn. As the curtain rises, the* OLD MAN *has just shut and bolted the outside door as if shutting some one out. He is partly dressed and carries a lighted candle in his hand.*

Prudence. Well, what did he say?

Old Man. Nothing. He's gone, if that's any comfort to you.

Prudence. It is a comfort to me. I don't like folks coming to the door at this time of night.

Old Man. You might have stirred yourself to take a look at him. He was that cold I could hear his teeth chatter.

Prudence. What was he like?

Old Man. Youngish, I'd say, with thin cheeks and a yellow beard. But I never seen such old looking eyes as he had.

Prudence. Go to bed, uncle.

Old Man. Both his hands were bandaged. I could see the blood on 'em.

Prudence. Well, what of it? We can't be feeding every beggar that comes to the house.

Old Man (*at the window*). He ain't turned the willows at the bend of the road. I could holler to him yet.

Prudence. Go back to bed, I tell you, and let me read my Bible till Peter comes in.

Old Man (*going toward the inside door*). You've set me thinking, Prudence Steel. You've set me thinking again.

Prudence. Hush your mouth, and go to bed.

Old Man. Aye, aye, that's it! "To them that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." If folks only knows enough to keep their mouths shut.

Prudence. Now, you're blaspheming again.

Old Man. Maybe I am. But if I was to open my mouth now and tell what I can remember clear as day, wouldn't I be serving the Lord? Answer me that.

Prudence. Nobody'd believe you.

Old Man. I ain't asking 'em to. If you and Peter can disremember what happened in this room, it ain't for me to turn against my own kin.

Prudence. Nothing happened in this room.

Old Man. Maybe I never seen thirty one-hundred dollar bills counted out on this table.

Prudence. Go to bed.

Old Man. I'm going — I'm going, but it would do me good to see them that's proud pulled down and her that wouldn't spare a crust for a lame beggar on Christmas Eve, losing a piece of money like that as a judgment. It would be as fine a judgment as ever I see in that there book of yours.

(*The old man goes out chuckling. Prudence follows him to the door, closes it, listens a moment, then blows out the lamp on the larger table and returns to the chair by the fire. She turns the pages of the book and then lays it face down on her knee and puts her hand over her eyes. The whole stage is now nearly dark, the only light coming from the lamp on the small table and from the fire in the grate.* THE TRAMP *opens the outside door and steps into the room. Prudence stirs a little and the book drops from her lap, rousing her. She sits up and listens. The Tramp closes the door and shoots the bolt.*)

Prudence. You're powerful late getting in.

Tramp. Aye, maybe I am. (*He rattles the door to see if it is fast.*)

Prudence. Hush your noise with the bolt, can't you! You'll be having Uncle down here again.

Tramp. I'll take my chance of that!

Prudence. What's the matter with your voice?

Tramp. It's the river fog sticking in my throat.

Prudence (*rising*). Come here and let me look at you. I never heard you speak with that voice before.

Tramp (*stepping into the light*). I dare say you never did!

Prudence. God save us! I thought you were my husband!

Tramp. I gathered as much from your friendly greeting. (*He comes a step nearer.*)

Prudence. Stand off or I'll scream! What do you want? Who are you?

Tramp. What's the need of your knowing?

Prudence. Tell me what you want and get out of my house. You needn't grin at me. I'm not afraid of you!

Tramp. You're a bold woman!

Prudence. I have cause to be, with a husband leaving me lonesome half the nights of the year, and beggars prowling the dark like rats.

Tramp. You've a brave tongue in your head, and a kind voice, like a chilly wind on a tin church steeple. You'll ask me to sit by your fire next and offer me a sup of something hot.

Prudence. I'll point you the door you came in by, and set the dog to your coat-tails.

Tramp. Fine hospitality for the beginning of Christmas Day.

Prudence. Who are you?

Tramp. Dust of the road, my dear, like any other man. Dust with a spark of fire in it.

Prudence. You're a tramp, by the looks of you — or worse.

Tramp. A tramp is it? That's what you'd call a gay fellow tramping the hills for the clean joy of sun and air; keen snow in winter and the voice of the birds in the warm season. It's what you'd call the lifeless wretches, skulking from doorstep to doorstep for the leavings of other folks' tables. I'm neither the one sort nor the other, but the name fits me well enough.

Prudence. Whatever you call yourself, you've got no business in a decent person's house at the middle of the night.

Tramp (*taking a pipe from his pocket and filling it*). Is your husband like to be home soon?

Prudence. You'll hear him at the door any minute now. If you're thinking of robbery you'd better be quick about it. There's little enough to take.

Tramp (*lighting his pipe and seating himself on the edge of the large table*). You can keep your hand off that trinket at your neck and make your mind easy about the spoons. I'm a disreputable character, a prowler in the night, a betrayer of friendship: I've none of what you'd call common decency; I'd as leave eat your bread and kiss your hand and do you a dirty turn afterward as not, but — well — I've a different whim. I'm not here to make you trouble.

Prudence. Fine ideas you've got! What'll my husband say when he smells the smoke of your pipe?

Tramp. I'm waiting to see him myself when he comes in.

Prudence. Like as not he'll break your head for your pains.

Tramp. Aye, like as not.

Prudence. You've got gall to be sitting there swinging your feet.

Tramp. I'm thinking what I'll say to you in the meantime.

Prudence. You won't be doing much thinking when he's pounded you till the teeth ache in your jaws.

Tramp (*in a cold sharp voice and speaking very slowly*).

Why did you send that other beggar away just now, Prudence Steele?

Prudence. So you know my name, do you?

Tramp. Yes! It's a cruel sounding name, Prudence Steele, and you've a cruel way of speaking and of looking at a poor man, my dear!

Prudence. You're a fine hand at a compliment, Mister Tramp.

Tramp. Why did you send him away?

Prudence. Send who away?

Tramp. The lame man with the bandages on his hands and feet.

Prudence. What's that to you?

Tramp. I was standing in the road. I saw him knock at your door. I saw it open a little. I saw it close again. I saw him go away — just as I've seen him go from thousands of other doors.

Prudence. He must be a friend of yours.

Tramp. No. He was one once. Now he's a creditor.

Prudence. By the looks of it, he'll have a hard time getting his money.

Tramp. Money's easy to find, — sometimes too easy. Now if you'd care to feel in my pockets — (*He jingles coins in his pockets.*)

Prudence. Well, pay him then, and keep him from pestering other folks.

Tramp. One isn't always minded to pay one's debts. And sometimes it's not so easy as you'd think. Only one day of the year I walk the same road with him. I follow him with the money in my hand. I met him at your gate just now and offered it. He turned aside his face. Would

you like to see the coins? (*Holding out his hand with coins*) You must. Thirty pieces of silver coined in the Roman mint at Jerusalem.

(*Faint blue light now illumines the face of The Tramp and becomes brighter as the scene goes on.*)

Prudence (*fascinated, looking at the money*). You frighten me. What are those stains?

Tramp. Blood, my dear! It's blood money.

Prudence. Whose blood?

Tramp. The man's who knocked at your door.

Prudence. What did he want?

Tramp. He came to give — not to ask.

Prudence. What beggar would be going about the country giving something away?

Tramp. Yes, Prudence Steele, what beggar would be doing that? It's a riddle for you to read.

Prudence. And I suppose, now, you've got something to give me!

Tramp. Yes, something you won't be likely to take.

Prudence. Huh! Advice, I suppose. That's the cheapest thing I know.

Tramp. Sit down. (*Prudence sits down.*) Where the man with the wounded hands knocks once, he knocks again. Wherever he's turned away, I find the door unlatched. But open the door to him, and I stand in the road outside, — I'm glad! Oh, I'm a person of strange contradictions — like any other man. You don't understand me.

Prudence. No.

Tramp. No matter! When he knocks again, let him come in.

Prudence. What do you mean?

Tramp. Let him come in, I tell you, and save the joy of life in your heart.

(*There is a stamping outside and the door is shaken.*)

Peter (*outside*). Hi! Open the door! Prudence, I say! Wake up and open the door!

Prudence (*starting and passing her hands across her eyes*). It's Peter. It's my husband.

Tramp. Open the door for him!

(*Prudence runs to the door and opens it. Peter enters and she clings to him, half hysterical. The Tramp remains seated on the larger table, but the light fades from his face.*)

Prudence. Peter — oh, Peter, Peter!

Peter. What's biting you? Let go my arm, woman! Are you trying to claw the coat off me?

Prudence. Send him away! Send him away! Send him away!

Peter. Take your hands off me.

Prudence. Send him away!

Peter. Send who away?

Prudence. That man! That man over there! I'm afraid of him!

Peter. What man?

Prudence. He came in without knocking. I thought it was you! He's terrible — he's crazy! Look at his eyes! Send him away!

Peter. Go on! Don't be a fool. There's nobody here!

Prudence. Over there! He was standing by the table. The table over there. . . . He's gone!

(*They both move across the room, but The Tramp has disappeared in the darkness.*)

Peter. You've been asleep! You've had a nightmare. You've been worrying again. You'd no call to sit up waiting for me. There's been nobody here.

Prudence. I could have taken my solemn oath! . . .

Peter (*roughly*). You'll take no oaths except them I tell you to. Go to bed!

Prudence. Where've you been?

Peter. Up to the church. I stayed to a vestry meeting. I walked home slow.

Prudence. You've decided what we're going to do?

Peter. Go to bed and let me think. I'll tell you in the morning.

(*Prudence moves toward the inside door. Peter calls her back.*)

Peter. Look here! You'll keep your mouth shut? You'll stick to that?

Prudence. Yes. (*She makes a move as if she were coming back to say something.*)

Peter. Get out of here and let me alone. (*He sits down in the chair by the fire and puts his face in his hands. Prudence goes out. The Tramp reappears.*)

Tramp. Well, Peter Steele, is it easy to think of perjury and theft on Christmas morning?

Peter. God! Who's talking to me!

Tramp. A greater rogue than yourself.

Peter (*rising*). I see you now, confound you! Where were you hiding when I came in?

Tramp. No matter!

Peter. So, my wife wasn't dreaming, eh!

Tramp. No more than you are.

Peter. You frightened her, eh! I'll make short work of you. (*He begins rolling up his sleeves.*)

Tramp. I only gave her a little advice.

Peter. I'll give you something else! (*He moves toward the tramp.*)

Tramp (*coolly*). Sit down!

Peter. Get out of here, with your advice! Get out, I tell you, before I kick you out.

Tramp (*more harshly but without moving*). Sit down.

Peter. You can't frighten me with your talk. I'm an honest man, I tell you.

Tramp. So was I once.

Peter. What have you got to do with me?

Tramp. "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known."

Peter (*with a sigh of relief*). Oh, I see now. You're only a traveling preacher.

Tramp. No, but I've traveled much and worn the cloth in my time.

Peter. I don't see what you're driving at!

Tramp. You will presently.

Peter. I won't listen to you.

Tramp. You know what's coming.

Peter. How should I know what's coming? I'll — I'll —

Tramp. You'll listen, Peter Steele, because I'm going

to tell you something about yourself and you'll know it for the truth.

Peter. If — if some one sent you here to pump me, you'd better be off, or I'll have the law on you both.

Tramp. You had a friend, Peter Steele, and you loved him. He'd often left his affairs in your hands. You'd served him honestly and he trusted you.

Peter. And why wouldn't anybody trust me? I've been an honest man, I tell you.

Tramp. He came to you in this room. It was the spring the war began. He had enlisted a company. Before he left you he brought you money, money to keep for his boy.

Peter. It's a lie! I tell you, it's a lie! What right's the boy got to think his father gave me money to keep for him? He ain't got a receipt, has he? It ain't shown in the accounts, is it?

Tramp. No, Peter Steele, the boy can't show a receipt and the entry's not to be found in the accounts.

Peter. By what token do you think a man would be fool enough to leave money lying around loose like that?

Tramp. By the token that he trusted you.

Peter. I never had it! I tell you I never had it! What do you know about it?

Tramp. The drums were beating in the road. Your friend was in his captain's uniform. His sword lay on the table by the door; his cloak over the back of that chair. You sat here. He stood across the table from you. Your wife sat where you're sitting now; her uncle over there by the window.

Peter. Who told you all that? What tricks are you trying to play on me?

Tramp. Your friend laid the money on this table; thirty one-hundred dollar bills. He said to you, "Peter, I want to leave this money with you. In case I don't come back, I'd rather my boy didn't count on anything at all when he makes his start. I've fixed things safe for him till he can earn his keep. This is something extra, a nest egg for him, when he's twenty-one." Then he shook you by the hand. As he went down the path, the drums stopped beating, and when the room was still again you heard the voice of the money!

Peter. How did you know that?

Tramp. Oh, you meant to keep faith, Peter Steele, but you never entered the three thousand dollars in your accounts. Well, he never came back. You read his name in the lists. It set you thinking about the boy and his money. Years went by. The boy began to work and earn his keep. You watched him grow up and wondered if he guessed. Last week, you remembered that your debt fell due on the day after Christmas. Then you sat down to figure interest. You'd used the money well and you tried a just rate. The total startled you. Then you tried three per cent; still too much! Then you sat quiet and the money whispered to you, "Why give me up at all? No one can prove you ever had me."

Peter. And they can't prove it! My wife and her uncle can swear they never saw it paid.

Tramp. Certainly.

Peter. The boy can't show a receipt.

Tramp. None.

Peter. No. I don't know who told you all this, but if you're trying to blackmail me, there's the door.

Tramp. I'll not trouble you again, whatever decision you come to.

Peter. Then, what did you come here for? Answer me that!

Tramp. To advise you to give the boy his money of your own free will.

Peter. Ha! Ha! Anything else?

Tramp. No.

Peter. Who are you, stranger?

Tramp. Come closer!

Peter. I can see you well enough from here.

Tramp. Come here and look at me. Have you ever seen me before?

Peter. No, thank Heaven! I never have.

Tramp. Look in my eyes.

(*Peter moves toward him as if dazed.*)

Peter. They're like the eyes of a cat! There's fire in 'em!

Tramp. Flame from a sunset under Calvary. Look at my throat!

Peter (*shrinking away*). I've seen marks like that on a man. . . .

Tramp. I hanged myself to a dead tree on a stony hillside. Listen!

(*He jingles the money in his pocket.*)

Peter. It's the sound of money!

Tramp. Thirty pieces of silver, coined in the Roman

mint at Jerusalem; the price of my soul, that's walked the evil edge of the world, for nineteen centuries.

Peter. In God's name, tell me who you are!

Tramp. The one being that knows best the priceless value of the thing you're so ready to sell — Judas of Kerioth.

(*He advances toward Peter, who sinks into the chair by the fire, cowering away from him.*)

Peter. Let me alone, I say! Let me alone!

Tramp. You'd been an honest man, Peter Steele, and the sun had warmed you and the birds piped to you when you ploughed the fields. You'd looked against the faces of red hills when dawn was new, and strained your eyes across blue valleys at the close of day. And men spoke you fair in the roads and children turned to you as you passed, till a little while ago. What came over you that you'd put the joy of living in pawn for thirty pieces of money?

Peter. Let me be! I've become a hard man; and money's a big thing in the world. What's the piping of birds to me? Leave me alone and let me sell my soul if I like! It's mine to sell!

Tramp. Aye! It's yours to sell. To sell over and over, if you like. There's money to be got for it, more than the first price you take, and pride, and ease of body, and fear of men! But it isn't only your soul you sell, Peter Steele, and nothing you get will compare with that which goes out of you when the first payment clinks in your hand.

Peter. Let me be! Let me be!

Tramp. You'll miss the joy of small things crying in the grass, and the pleasant sadness that comes of watching the fall of yellow leaves. You'll take no comfort in the sound of a woman's singing, or the laughing of a child, or the crackling of a fire in the grate.

Peter. I was never a hand at noticing such things.

Tramp. No, but an honest man shares all the common gifts of God. He feels and is grateful without knowing how or why. He seldom knows the joy of it all, till he's lost the power of feeling.

Peter. Let me be.

Tramp. You'll walk the sunshiny roads and have only the dust of them in your throat. You'll see little lakes lying in the bosom of the hills, like purple wine in cups of green jade, and have only the pain of daylight in your eyes. You'll lie down to sleep with the crystal stars blinking at you, and have only the empty blackness of night in your heart. I know how it will be with you, Peter Steele.

Peter. What do you want me to do?

Tramp. Give up the money of your own free will.

Peter. What interest have you got in seeing me go straight? Whose work are you doing?

Tramp (*slowly*). It's one thing to die in a splendid agony and save the world. It's another to drag the weight of a name like mine from century to century; to live on and on, and suffer every pain of death; to save a man here and a man there only to balance my own long account — to die — to be forgotten.

Peter. To balance your long account?

Tramp. Turn you from the thing you're about to do,

and I toss a grain of dust into the scales. There's a heavy weight to be balanced, Peter Steele, and it's only one day of the year I'm free to search.

Peter. Let me be.

Tramp. Would you rob me, too?

Peter (*putting his hands to his head*). Let me think, I tell you! Let me think!

(*The inside door opens, and Prudence enters dressed in a wrapper and carrying a small lamp. As the light illumines that side of the room, the glow fades on the Tramp's face and he disappears. Peter sits with his head in his hands, just as Prudence left him.*)

Prudence. Peter, Peter, are you asleep?

Peter (*starting*). Eh? No.

Prudence. Why haven't you come to bed? It's near daylight.

Peter. I've been thinking, Prudence — I've been thinking.

Prudence. About — about?

Peter. Say it. I've been thinking of perjury and theft on Christmas morning. I've been thinking of selling my soul for thirty pieces of money. (*He rises.*) But, thank God, I haven't sold it yet.

Prudence (*going to him*). Oh, Peter! Peter!

Peter. The boy will get his money on the nail. I'm an honest man, Prudence, I'm an honest man, I tell you!

Prudence. Oh, Peter, I'm glad, I'm glad!

Peter. Every penny he'll get and interest. Fair interest!

Prudence. It's a great deal of money, but I'm glad!

Peter. Little enough to give for keeping the joy of living in your heart on Christmas Day.

Prudence. I want to tell you something. I couldn't sleep either. Oh, Peter, I couldn't sleep.

Peter. You've been thinking of it, too.

Prudence. Not about the money. There was a lame man here just before you came in. I sent him away. It worries me, Peter. I'm sorry I didn't let him in. Uncle saw him. He'd been hurt. His feet and hands were bandaged. I thought — I thought perhaps . . . I feel as if he'd stopped somewhere near the house.

Peter. Which way did he go?

Prudence. Toward the willows at the bend of the road.

Peter (*reaching for his hat and coat*). Like as not he'd try to shelter himself there. (*He moves toward the outside door.*)

Prudence. Where are you going?

Peter. To find him and fetch him back. We can't let him freeze.

(*They go together to the outside door and open it. It is morning outside.*)

Peter. It's morning already.

Prudence. Did you ever see such a dawn on the snow?

Peter. Never in my life. (*He kisses her and goes out.*)

Prudence (*calling after him*). I'll have the coffee on the stove.

CURTAIN

ILE

(A Play in One Act)

BY

EUGENE G. O'NEILL

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CHARACTERS

BEN	The cabin boy
THE STEWARD	
CAPTAIN KEENEY	
SLOCUM	Second mate
MRS. KEENEY	
JOE	A harpooner

Members of the crew of the steam whaler *Atlantic Queen.*

ILE

SCENE: — *Captain Keeney's cabin on board the steam whaling ship* Atlantic Queen — *a small, square compartment about eight feet high with a skylight in the center looking out on the poop deck. On the left (the stern of the ship) a long bench with rough cushions is built in against the wall. In front of the bench, a table. Over the bench, several curtained portholes.*

In the rear, left, a door leading to the captain's sleeping quarters. To the right of the door a small organ, looking as if it were brand-new, is placed against the wall.

On the right, to the rear, a marble-topped sideboard. On the sideboard, a woman's sewing basket. Farther forward, a doorway leading to the companionway, and past the officers' quarters to the main deck.

In the center of the room, a stove. From the middle of the ceiling a hanging lamp is suspended. The walls of the cabin are painted white.

There is no rolling of the ship, and the light which comes through the skylight is sickly and faint, indicating one of those gray days of calm when ocean and sky are alike dead. The silence is unbroken except for the measured tread of some one walking up and down on the poop deck overhead.

It is nearing two bells — one o'clock — in the afternoon of a day in the year 1895.

At the rise of the curtain there is a moment of intense

silence. Then the STEWARD *enters and commences to clear the table of the few dishes which still remain on it after the Captain's dinner. He is an old, grizzled man dressed in dungaree pants, a sweater, and a woolen cap with ear flaps. His manner is sullen and angry. He stops stacking up the plates and casts a quick glance upward at the skylight; then tiptoes over to the closed door in rear and listens with his ear pressed to the crack. What he hears makes his face darken and he mutters a furious curse. There is a noise from the doorway on the right and he darts back to the table.*

BEN *enters. He is an over-grown, gawky boy with a long, pinched face. He is dressed in sweater, fur cap, etc. His teeth are chattering with the cold and he hurries to the stove, where he stands for a moment shivering, blowing on his hands, slapping them against his sides, on the verge of crying.*

The Steward (*in relieved tones — seeing who it is*). Oh, 'tis you, is it? What're ye shiverin' 'bout? Stay by the stove where ye belong and ye'll find no need of chatterin'.

Ben. It's c-c-cold. (*Trying to control his chattering teeth — derisively*) Who d'ye think it were — the Old Man?

The Steward (*makes a threatening move — Ben shrinks away*). None o' your lip, young un, or I'll learn ye. (*More kindly*) Where was it ye've been all o' the time — the fo'c's'tle?

Ben. Yes.

The Steward. Let the Old Man see ye up for'ard monkeyshinin' with the hands and ye'll get a hidin' ye'll not forget in a hurry.

Ben. Aw, he don't see nothin'. (*A trace of awe in his tones — he glances upward.*) He just walks up and down like he didn't notice nobody — and stares at the ice to the no'the'ard.

The Steward (*the same tone of awe creeping into his voice*). He's always starin' at the ice. (*In a sudden rage, shaking his fist at the skylight*) Ice, ice, ice! Holdin' us in for nigh on a year — nothin' to see but ice — stuck in it like a fly in molasses!

Ben (*apprehensively*). Ssshh! He'll hear ye.

The Steward (*subsiding as if realizing the uselessness of this outburst — shaking his head — slowly, with deep conviction*). He's a hard man — as hard a man as ever sailed the seas.

Ben (*solemnly*). Aye.

The Steward. The two years we all signed up for are done this day. Two years o' this dog's life, and no luck in the fishin', and the hands half starved with the food runnin' low, rotten as it is; and not a sign of him turnin' back for home! (*Bitterly*) Home! I begin to doubt if ever I'll set foot on land again. (*Excitedly*) What is it he thinks he's goin' to do? Keep us all up here after our time is worked out till the last man of us is starved to death or frozen? We've grub enough hardly to last out the voyage back if we started now. What are the men goin' to do 'bout it? Did ye hear any talk in the fo'c's'tle?

Ben (*going over to him — in a half whisper*). They said if he don't put back south for home to-day they're goin' to mutiny.

The Steward (*with grim satisfaction*). Mutiny? Aye,

'tis the only thing they can do; and serve him right after the manner he's treated them — 's if they wer'n't no better nor dogs.

Ben. The ice is all broke up to s'uth'ard. They's clear water 's far 's you can see. He ain't got no excuse for not turnin' back for home, the men says.

The Steward (*bitterly*). He won't look nowheres but no'the'ard where they's only the ice to see. He don't want to see no clear water. All he thinks on is gittin' the ile — 's if it was our fault he ain't had good luck with the whales. (*Shaking his head*) I think the man's mighty nigh losin' his senses.

Ben (*awed*). D'you really think he's crazy?

The Steward. Aye, it's the punishment o' God on him. Did ye ever hear of a man who wasn't crazy do the things he does? (*Pointing to the door in rear*) Who but a man that's mad would take his woman — and as sweet a woman as ever was — on a whalin' ship to the Arctic seas to be locked in by the rotten ice for nigh on a year, and maybe lose her senses forever — for it's sure she'll never be the same again.

Ben (*sadly*). She useter be awful nice to me before —— (*His eyes grow wide and frightened.*) she got — like she is.

The Steward. Aye, she was good to all of us. 'Twould have been hell on board without her; for he's a hard man — a hard, hard man — a driver if there ever was one. (*With a grim laugh*) I hope he's satisfied now — drivin' her on till she's near lost her mind. And who could blame her? 'Tis a God's wonder we're not a ship full of crazed people — with the ice all the time, and the quiet so thick you're afraid to hear your own voice.

Ben (*with a frightened glance toward the door on right*). She don't never speak to me no more — jest looks at me 's if she didn't know me.

The Steward. She don't know no one — but him. She talks to him — when she does talk — right enough.

Ben. She does nothin' all day long now but sit and sew— and then she cries to herself without makin' no noise. I've seen her.

The Steward. Aye, I could hear her through the door a while back.

Ben (*tiptoes over to the door and listens*). She's cryin' now.

(*There is the noise of some one coming slowly down the companionway stairs. The Steward hurries to his stacked-up dishes. He is so nervous from fright that he knocks off the top one, which falls and breaks on the floor. He stands aghast, trembling with dread. Ben is violently rubbing off the organ with a piece of cloth which he has snatched from his pocket.* Captain Keeney *appears in the doorway on right and comes into the cabin, removing his fur cap as he does so. He is a man of about forty, around five-ten in height but looking much shorter on account of the enormous proportions of his shoulders and chest. His face is massive and deeply lined, with gray-blue eyes of a bleak hardness, and a tightly clenched, thin-lipped mouth. His thick hair is long and gray. He is dressed in a heavy blue jacket and blue pants stuffed into his seaboots.*

He is followed into the cabin by the Second Mate, *a rangy six-footer with a lean weatherbeaten face. The Mate is dressed about the same as the Captain. He is a man of thirty or so.*)

Keeney (*comes toward the Steward — with a stern look on his face. The Steward is visibly frightened and the stack of dishes rattles in his trembling hands. Keeney draws back his fist and the Steward shrinks away. The fist is gradually lowered and Keeney speaks slowly*). 'Twould be like hitting a worm. It is nigh on two bells, Mr. Steward, and this truck not cleared yet.

The Steward (*stammering*). Y-y-yes, sir.

Keeney. Instead of doin' your rightful work ye've been below here gossipin' old woman's talk with that boy. (*To Ben, fiercely*) Get out o' this, you! Clean up the chart room. (*Ben darts past the Mate to the open doorway.*) Pick up that dish, Mr. Steward!

The Steward (*doing so with difficulty*). Yes, sir.

Keeney. The next dish you break, Mr. Steward, you take a bath in the Bering Sea at the end of a rope.

The Steward (*tremblingly*). Yes, sir. (*He hurries out. The Second Mate walks slowly over to the Captain.*)

Mate. I warn't 'specially anxious the man at the wheel should catch what I wanted to say to you, sir. That's why I asked you to come below.

Keeney (*impatiently*). Speak your say, Mr. Slocum.

Mate (*unconsciously lowering his voice*). I'm afeard there'll be trouble with the hands by the look o' things. They'll likely turn ugly, every blessed one o' them, if you don't put back. The two years they signed up for is up to-day.

Keeney. And d'you think you're tellin' me somethin' new, Mr. Slocum? I've felt it in the air this long time past. D'you think I've not seen their ugly looks and the grudgin' way they worked?

(*The door in rear is opened and* MRS. KEENEY *stands in the doorway. She is a slight, sweet-faced little woman primly dressed in black. Her eyes are red from weeping and her face drawn and pale. She takes in the cabin with a frightened glance and stands as if fixed to the spot by some nameless dread, clasping and unclasping her hands nervously. The two men turn and look at her.*)

Keeney (*with rough tenderness*). Well, Annie?

Mrs. Keeney (*as if awakening from a dream*). David, I —— (*She is silent. The Mate starts for the doorway.*)

Keeney (*turning to him — sharply*). Wait!

Mate. Yes, sir.

Keeney. D'you want anything, Annie?

Mrs. Keeney (*after a pause, during which she seems to be endeavoring to collect her thoughts*). I thought maybe — I'd go up on deck, David, to get a breath of fresh air. (*She stands humbly awaiting his permission. He and the Mate exchange a significant glance.*)

Keeney. It's too cold, Annie. You'd best stay below to-day. There's nothing to look at on deck — but ice.

Mrs. Keeney (*monotonously*). I know — ice, ice, ice! But there's nothing to see down here but these walls. (*She makes a gesture of loathing.*)

Keeney. You can play the organ, Annie.

Mrs. Keeney (*dully*). I hate the organ. It puts me in mind of home.

Keeney (*a touch of resentment in his voice*). I got it jest for you.

Mrs. Keeney (*dully*). I know. (*She turns away from them and walks slowly to the bench on left. She lifts up one*

of the curtains and looks through a porthole; then utters an exclamation of joy.) Ah, water! Clear water! As far as I can see! How good it looks after all these months of ice! (*She turns round to them, her face transfigured with joy.*) Ah, now I must go up on deck and look at it, David.

Keeney (*frowning*). Best not to-day, Annie. Best wait for a day when the sun shines.

Mrs. Keeney (*desperately*). But the sun never shines in this terrible place.

Keeney (*a tone of command in his voice*). Best not to-day, Annie.

Mrs. Keeney (*crumbling before this command — abjectly*). Very well, David. (*She stands there staring straight before her as if in a daze. The two men look at her uneasily.*)

Keeney (*sharply*). Annie!

Mrs. Keeney (*dully*). Yes, David.

Keeney. Me and Mr. Slocum has business to talk about — ship's business.

Mrs. Keeney. Very well, David. (*She goes slowly out, rear, and leaves the door three-quarters shut behind her.*)

Keeney. Best not have her on deck if they's goin' to be any trouble.

Mate. Yes, sir.

Keeney. And trouble they's goin' to be. I feel it in my bones. (*Takes a revolver from the pocket of his coat and examines it.*) Got your'n?

Mate. Yes, sir.

Keeney. Not that we'll have to use 'em — not if I know their breed of dog — jest to frighten 'em up a bit. (*Grimly*) I ain't never been forced to use one yit; and

trouble I've had by land and by sea 's long as I kin remember, and will have till my dyin' day, I reckon.

Mate (*hesitatingly*). Then you ain't goin' — to turn back?

Keeney. Turn back! Mr. Slocum, did you ever hear o' me pointin' s'uth for home with only a measly four hundred barrel of ile in the hold?

Mate (*hastily*). No, sir — but the grub's gittin' low.

Keeney. They's enough to last a long time yit, if they're careful with it; and they's plenty o' water.

Mate. They say it's not fit to eat — what's left; and the two years they signed on fur is up to-day. They might make trouble for you in the courts when we git home.

Keeney. Let them make what law trouble they kin. I've got to git the ile! (*Glancing sharply at the Mate*) You ain't turnin' sea lawyer, be you, Mr. Slocum?

Mate (*flushing*). No, sir.

Keeney. What do the fools want to go home fur now? Their share o' the four hundred barrel wouldn't keep 'em in chewin' terbacco.

Mate (*slowly*). They wants to git back to their folks an' things, I s'pose.

Keeney (*looking at him searchingly*). 'N' you want to turn back, too. (*The Mate looks down confusedly before his sharp gaze.*) Don't lie, Mr. Slocum. It's writ down plain in your eyes. (*With grim sarcasm*) I hope, Mr. Slocum, you ain't agoin' to jine the men agin me.

Mate (*indignantly*). That ain't fair, sir, to say sich things.

Keeney (*with satisfaction*). I warn't much afeared o'

that, Tom. You been with me nigh on ten year and I've learned ye whalin'. No man kin say I ain't a good master, if I be a hard one.

Mate. I warn't thinkin' of myself, sir — 'bout turnin' home, I mean. (*Desperately*) But Mrs. Keeney, sir — seems like she ain't jest satisfied up here, ailin' like — what with the cold an' bad luck an' the ice an' all.

Keeney (*his face clouding — rebukingly but not severely*). That's my business, Mr. Slocum. I'll thank you to steer a clear course o' that. (*A pause*) The ice'll break up soon to no'the'ard. I could see it startin' to-day. And when it goes and we git some sun Annie'll perk up. (*Another pause — then he bursts forth.*) It ain't the money what's keepin' me up in the Northern seas, Tom. But I can't go back to Homeport with a measly four hundred barrel of ile. I'd die fust. I ain't never come back home in all my days without a full ship. Ain't that truth?

Mate. Yes, sir; but this voyage you been icebound, an' ——

Keeney (*scornfully*). And d'you s'pose any of 'em would believe that — any o' them skippers I've beaten voyage after voyage? Can't you hear 'em laughin' and sneerin' — Tibbots 'n' Harris 'n' Simms and the rest — and all o' Homeport makin' fun o' me? "Dave Keeney what boasts he's the best whalin' skipper out o' Homeport comin' back with a measly four hundred barrel of ile"? (*The thought of this drives him into a frenzy, and he smashes his fist down on the marble top of the sideboard.*) I got to git the ile, I tell you. How could I figger on this ice? It's never been so bad before in the thirty year I been acomin' here. And now it's breakin' up. In a couple

o' days it'll be all gone. And they's whale here, plenty of 'em. I know they is and I ain't never gone wrong yit. I got to git the ile! I ain't agoin' home till I do git it! (*There is the sound of subdued sobbing from the door in rear. The two men stand silent for a moment, listening. Then Keeney goes over to the door and looks in. He hesitates for a moment as if he were going to enter — then closes the door softly.* JOE, *the harpooner, an enormous six-footer with a battered, ugly face, enters from right and stands waiting for the Captain to notice him.*)

Keeney (*turning and seeing him*). Don't be standin' there like a gawk, Harpooner. Speak up!

Joe (*confusedly*). We want — the men, sir — they wants to send a depitation aft to have a word with you.

Keeney (*furiously*). Tell 'em to go to —— (*Checks himself and continues grimly.*) Tell 'em to come. I'll see 'em.

Joe. Aye, aye, sir. (*He goes out.*)

Keeney (*with a grim smile*). Here it comes, the trouble you spoke of, Mr. Slocum, and we'll make short shift of it. It's better to crush such things at the start than let them make headway.

Mate (*worriedly*). Shall I wake up the First and Fourth, sir? We might need their help.

Keeney. No, let them sleep. I'm well able to handle this alone, Mr. Slocum. (*There is the shuffling of footsteps from outside and five of the crew crowd into the cabin, led by Joe. All are dressed alike — sweaters, seaboots, etc. They glance uneasily at the Captain, twirling their fur caps in their hands.*)

Keeney (*after a pause*). Well? Who's to speak fur ye?

Joe (*stepping forward with an air of bravado*). I be.

Keeney (*eying him up and down coldly*). So you be. Then speak your say and be quick about it.

Joe (*trying not to wilt before the Captain's glance and avoiding his eyes*). The time we signed up for is done to-day.

Keeney (*icily*). You're tellin' me nothin' I don't know.

Joe. You ain't pintin' fur home yit, far 's we kin see.

Keeney. No, and I ain't agoin' to till this ship is full of ile.

Joe. You can't go no further no'the with the ice afore ye.

Keeney. The ice is breaking up.

Joe (*after a slight pause during which the others mumble angrily to one another*). The grub we're gittin' now is rotten.

Keeney. It's good enough fur ye. Better men than ye are have eaten worse. (*There is a chorus of angry exclamations from the crowd.*)

Joe (*encouraged by this support*). We ain't agoin' to work no more 'less you puts back for home.

Keeney (*fiercely*). You ain't, ain't you?

Joe. No; and the law courts'll say we was right.

Keeney. We're at sea now and I'm the law on this ship. (*Edging up toward the harpooner*) And every mother's son of you what don't obey orders goes in irons. (*There are more angry exclamations from the crew. Mrs. Keeney appears in the doorway in rear and looks on with startled eyes. None of the men notice her.*)

Joe (*with bravado*). Then we're agoin' to mutiny and take the old hooker home ourselves. Ain't we, boys?

"And now git for'ard where ye belong, . . ."

(*As he turns his head to look at the others, Keeney's fist shoots out to the side of his jaw. Joe goes down in a heap and lies there. Mrs. Keeney gives a shriek and hides her face in her hands. The men pull out their sheath knives and start a rush, but stop when they find themselves confronted by the revolvers of Keeney and the Mate.*)

Keeney (*his eyes and voice snapping*). Hold still! (*The men stand huddled together in a sullen silence. Keeney's voice is full of mockery.*) You've found out it ain't safe to mutiny on this ship, ain't you? And now git for'ard where ye belong, and —— (*He gives Joe's body a contemptuous kick.*) Drag him with you. And remember the first man of ye I see shirkin' I'll shoot dead as sure as there's a sea under us, and you can tell the rest the same. Git for'ard now! Quick! (*The men leave in cowed silence, carrying Joe with them. Keeney turns to the Mate with a short laugh and puts his revolver back in his pocket.*) Best get up on deck, Mr. Slocum, and see to it they don't try none of their skulkin' tricks. We'll have to keep an eye peeled from now on. I know 'em.

Mate. Yes, sir. (*He goes out, right. Keeney hears his wife's hysterical weeping and turns around in surprise — then walks slowly to her side.*)

Keeney (*putting an arm around her shoulder — with gruff tenderness*). There, there, Annie. Don't be afeard. It's all past and gone.

Mrs. Keeney (*shrinking away from him*). Oh, I can't bear it! I can't bear it any longer!

Keeney (*gently*). Can't bear what, Annie?

Mrs. Keeney (*hysterically*). All this horrible brutality, and these brutes of men, and this terrible ship, and this

prison cell of a room, and the ice all around, and the silence. (*After this outburst she calms down and wipes her eyes with her handkerchief.*)

Keeney (*after a pause during which he looks down at her with a puzzled frown*). Remember, I warn't hankerin' to have you come on this voyage, Annie.

Mrs. Keeney. I wanted to be with you, David, don't you see? I didn't want to wait back there in the house all alone as I've been doing these last six years since we were married — waiting, and watching, and fearing — with nothing to keep my mind occupied — not able to go back teaching school on account of being Dave Keeney's wife. I used to dream of sailing on the great, wide, glorious ocean. I wanted to be by your side in the danger and vigorous life of it all. I wanted to see you the hero they make you out to be in Homeport. And instead —— (*Her voice grows tremulous.*) all I find is ice and cold — and brutality! (*Her voice breaks.*)

Keeney. I warned you what it'd be, Annie. "Whalin' ain't no ladies' tea party," I says to you, and "you better stay to home where you've got all your woman's comforts." (*Shaking his head*) But you was so set on it.

Mrs. Keeney (*wearily*). Oh, I know it isn't your fault, David. You see, I didn't believe you. I guess I was dreaming about the old Vikings in the story books and I thought you were one of them.

Keeney (*protestingly*). I done my best to make it as cozy and comfortable as could be. (*Mrs. Keeney looks around her in wild scorn.*) I even sent to the city for that organ for ye, thinkin' it might be soothin' to ye to be

playin' it times when they was calms and things was dull like.

Mrs. Keeney (*wearily*). Yes, you were very kind, David. I know that. (*She goes to left and lifts the curtains from the porthole and looks out — then suddenly bursts forth.*) I won't stand it — I can't stand it — pent up by these walls like a prisoner. (*She runs over to him and throws her arms around him, weeping. He puts his arm protectingly over her shoulders.*) Take me away from here, David! If I don't get away from here, out of this terrible ship, I'll go mad! Take me home, David! I can't think any more. I feel as if the cold and the silence were crushing down on my brain. I'm afraid. Take me home!

Keeney (*holds her at arm's length and looks at her face anxiously*). Best go to bed, Annie. You ain't yourself. You got fever. Your eyes look so strange like. I ain't never seen you look this way before.

Mrs. Keeney (*laughing hysterically*). It's the ice and the cold and the silence — they'd make any one look strange.

Keeney (*soothingly*). In a month or two, with good luck, three at the most, I'll have her filled with ile and then we'll give her everything she'll stand and pint for home.

Mrs. Keeney. But we can't wait for that — I can't wait. I want to get home. And the men won't wait. They want to get home. It's cruel, it's brutal for you to keep them. You must sail back. You've got no excuse. There's clear water to the south now. If you've a heart at all you've got to turn back.

Keeney (*harshly*). I can't, Annie.

Mrs. Keeney. Why can't you?

Keeney. A woman couldn't rightly understand my reason.

Mrs. Keeney (*wildly*). Because it's a stupid, stubborn reason. Oh, I heard you talking with the second mate. You're afraid the other captains will sneer at you because you didn't come back with a full ship. You want to live up to your silly reputation even if you do have to beat and starve men and drive me mad to do it.

Keeney (*his jaw set stubbornly*). It ain't that, Annie. Them skippers would never dare sneer to my face. It ain't so much what any one'd say — but —— (*He hesitates, struggling to express his meaning.*) You see — I've always done it — since my first voyage as skipper. I always come back — with a full ship — and — it don't seem right not to — somehow. I been always first whalin' skipper out o' Homeport, and —— Don't you see my meanin', Annie? (*He glances at her. She is not looking at him but staring dully in front of her, not hearing a word he is saying.*) Annie! (*She comes to herself with a start.*) Best turn in, Annie, there's a good woman. You ain't well.

Mrs. Keeney (*resisting his attempts to guide her to the door in rear*). David! Won't you please turn back?

Keeney (*gently*). I can't, Annie — not yet awhile. You don't see my meanin'. I got to git the ile.

Mrs. Keeney. It'd be different if you needed the money, but you don't. You've got more than plenty.

Keeney (*impatiently*). It ain't the money I'm thinkin' of. D'you think I'm as mean as that?

Mrs. Keeney (*dully*). No — I don't know — I can't

understand —— (*Intensely*) Oh, I want to be home in the old house once more and see my own kitchen again, and hear a woman's voice talking to me and be able to talk to her. Two years! It seems so long ago — as if I'd been dead and could never go back.

Keeney (*worried by her strange tone and the far-away look in her eyes*). Best go to bed, Annie. You ain't well.

Mrs. Keeney (*not appearing to hear him*). I used to be lonely when you were away. I used to think Homeport was a stupid, monotonous place. Then I used to go down on the beach, especially when it was windy and the breakers were rolling in, and I'd dream of the fine free life you must be leading. (*She gives a laugh which is half a sob.*) I used to love the sea then. (*She pauses; then continues with slow intensity.*) But now — I don't ever want to see the sea again.

Keeney (*thinking to humor her*). 'Tis no fit place for a woman, that's sure. I was a fool to bring ye.

Mrs. Keeney (*after a pause — passing her hand over her eyes with a gesture of pathetic weariness*). How long would it take us to reach home — if we started now?

Keeney (*frowning*). 'Bout two months, I reckon, Annie, with fair luck.

Mrs. Keeney (*counts on her fingers — then murmurs with a rapt smile*). That would be August, the latter part of August, wouldn't it? It was on the twenty-fifth of August we were married, David, wasn't it?

Keeney (*trying to conceal the fact that her memories have moved him — gruffly*). Don't *you* remember?

Mrs. Keeney (*vaguely — again passes her hand over her eyes*). My memory is leaving me — up here in the ice.

It was so long ago. (*A pause — then she smiles dreamily.*) It's June now. The lilacs will be all in bloom in the front yard — and the climbing roses on the trellis to the side of the house — they're budding. (*She suddenly covers her face with her hands and commences to sob.*)

Keeney (*disturbed*). Go in and rest, Annie. You're all wore out cryin' over what can't be helped.

Mrs. Keeney (*suddenly throwing her arms around his neck and clinging to him*). You love me, don't you, David?

Keeney (*in amazed embarrassment at this outburst*). Love you? Why d'you ask me such a question, Annie?

Mrs. Keeney (*shaking him — fiercely*). But you do, don't you, David? Tell me!

Keeney. I'm your husband, Annie, and you're my wife. Could there be aught but love between us after all these years?

Mrs. Keeney (*shaking him again — still more fiercely*). Then you do love me. Say it!

Keeney (*simply*). I do, Annie.

Mrs. Keeney (*gives a sigh of relief — her hands drop to her sides. Keeney turns away from her, deeply moved. She grabs his arm and turns him around to face her — intensely*). And I've always been a good wife to you, haven't I, David?

Keeney (*his voice betraying his emotion*). No man has ever had a better, Annie.

Mrs. Keeney. And I've never asked for much from you, have I, David? Have I?

Keeney. You know you could have all I got the power to give ye, Annie.

Mrs. Keeney (*wildly*). Then do this this once for my sake, for God's sake — take me home! It's killing me, this life — the brutality and cold and horror of it. I'm going mad. I can feel the threat in the air. I can hear the silence threatening me — day after gray day and every day the same. I can't bear it. (*Sobbing*) I'll go mad, I know I will. Take me home, David, if you love me as you say. I'm afraid. For the love of God, take me home! (*She throws her arms around him, weeping against his shoulder. His face betrays the tremendous struggle going on within him. He holds her out at arm's length, his expression softening. For a moment his shoulders sag, he becomes old, his iron spirit weakens as he looks at her tear-stained face.*)

Keeney (*dragging out the words with an effort*). I'll do it, Annie — for your sake — if you say it's needful for ye.

Mrs. Keeney (*with wild joy — kissing him*). God bless you for that, David! (*He turns away from her silently and walks toward the companionway. Just at that moment there is a clatter of footsteps on the stairs and the Second Mate enters the cabin.*)

Mate (*excitedly*). The ice is breakin' up to no'the'ard, sir. There's a clear passage through the floe, and clear water beyond, the lookout says.

(*Keeney straightens himself like a man coming out of a trance. Mrs. Keeney looks at the Mate with terrified eyes.*)

Keeney (*dazedly — trying to collect his thoughts*). A clear passage? To no'the'ard?

Mate. Yes, sir.

Keeney (*his voice suddenly grim with determination*). Then get her ready and we'll drive her through.

Mate. Aye, aye, sir.

Mrs. Keeney (*appealingly*). David!

Keeney (*not heeding her*). Will the men turn to willin' or must we drag 'em out?

Mate. They'll turn to willin' enough. You put the fear o' God into 'em, sir. They're meek as lambs.

Keeney. Then drive 'em — both watches. (*With grim determination*) They's whale t'other side o' this floe and we're going to git 'em.

Mate. Aye, aye, sir. (*He goes out hurriedly. A moment later there is the sound of scuffing feet from the deck outside and the Mate's voice shouting orders.*)

Keeney (*speaking aloud to himself — derisively*). And I was agoin' home like a yaller dog!

Mrs. Keeney (*imploringly*). David!

Keeney (*sternly*). Woman, you ain't adoin' right when you meddle in men's business and weaken 'em. You can't know my feelin's. I got to prove a man to be a good husband for ye to take pride in. I got to git the ile, I tell ye.

Mrs. Keeney (*supplicatingly*). David! Aren't you going home?

Keeney (*ignoring this question — commandingly*). You ain't well. Go and lay down a mite. (*He starts for the door.*) I got to git on deck. (*He goes out. She cries after him in anguish.*) David! (*A pause. She passes her hand across her eyes — then commences to laugh hysterically and goes to the organ. She sits down and starts to play wildly an old hymn. Keeney reënters from the door-*

way to the deck and stands looking at her angrily. He comes over and grabs her roughly by the shoulder.)

Keeney. Woman, what foolish mockin' is this? (*She laughs wildly and he starts back from her in alarm.*) Annie! What is it? (*She doesn't answer him. Keeney's voice trembles.*) Don't you know me, Annie? (*He puts both hands on her shoulders and turns her around so that he can look into her eyes. She stares up at him with a stupid expression, a vague smile on her lips. He stumbles away from her, and she commences softly to play the organ again.*)

Keeney (*swallowing hard — in a hoarse whisper, as if he had difficulty in speaking*). You said — you was agoin' mad — God! (*A long wail is heard from the deck above.*) Ah bl-o-o-o-ow! (*A moment later the Mate's face appears through the skylight. He cannot see Mrs. Keeney.*)

Mate (*in great excitement*). Whales, sir — a whole school of 'em — off the star'b'd quarter 'bout five mile away — big ones!

Keeney (*galvanized into action*). Are you lowerin' the boats?

Mate. Yes, sir.

Keeney (*with grim decision*). I'm acomin' with ye.

Mate. Aye, aye, sir. (*Jubilantly*) You'll git the ile now right enough, sir. (*His head is withdrawn and he can be heard shouting orders.*)

Keeney (*turning to his wife*). Annie! Did you hear him? I'll git the ile. (*She doesn't answer or seem to know he is there. He gives a hard laugh, which is almost a groan.*) I know you're foolin' me, Annie. You ain't out of your mind — (*anxiously*) be you? I'll git the ile now right

enough — jest a little while longer, Annie — then we'll turn hom'ard. I can't turn back now, you see that, don't ye? I've got to git the ile. (*In sudden terror*) Answer me! You ain't mad, be you? (*She keeps on playing the organ, but makes no reply. The Mate's face appears again through the skylight.*)

Mate. All ready, sir. (*Keeney turns his back on his wife and strides to the doorway, where he stands for a moment and looks back at her in anguish, fighting to control his feelings.*)

Mate. Comin', sir?

Keeney (*his face suddenly grown hard with determination*). Aye. (*He turns abruptly and goes out. Mrs. Keeney does not appear to notice his departure. Her whole attention seems centered in the organ. She sits with half-closed eyes, her body swaying a little from side to side to the rhythm of the hymn. Her fingers move faster and faster and she is playing wildly and discordantly as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE GOD OF QUIET

BY

JOHN DRINKWATER

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THE CHARACTERS ARE

A Young Beggar
An Old Beggar
A Citizen
A Soldier
First King
A Herald
Second King
The God

THE GOD OF QUIET

(*A road at the summit of a hill outside a beleaguered city. It is the evening of a hot summer day.*

On the far side of the road is a bank, from the top of which the city could be seen. On a great stone cube, halfway up the bank, is the life-sized figure of a god. Not unlike the Buddha in presence, it is the GOD OF QUIET.

Two BEGGARS, *a young man and an old, come in, moving towards the city. They stop.*)

Young Beggar. Nor coin nor crust.
Three leagues of dust
We've trodden. Blast
Them — let them fast
And try the flavor —
Old Beggar. Hold, man, hold —
'Twas like enough that our tale were told
For ever before the sun went down,
With the devils of war let loose to frown
On a poor man's cry for alms. We live,
And that is something —
Young Beggar. The Lord forgive
Your weakling heart —
Old Beggar. Nay, ask him, you,
To pardon the stubborn thing you do
In cursing when —

Young Beggar. Stop your babbling tongue,
Your belly's old but mine is young —
Old Beggar. Nay, nay, my son; not angry now —
Not angry — there. I've seen the plough
Break stouter stones — the times will mend.
Young Beggar. Old man, I spoke in haste —
Old Beggar. Come, lend
Your arm — there — so; now, let us sit
And rest us here.

(*The Old Man sits down on the bank; the Young Man goes to the top and looks out. While he speaks the Old Man watches the God.*)

Young Beggar. The slings have hit
That city hard. Well, let them fight
And finish. Broken walls are gates
Not warded well, and men in flight
Pay toll to beggars.
Old Beggar. God creates
Good holy times of peace for us —
Young Beggar. Peace — holy times — old chatter-pie —
Old Beggar. Rich seasons after ruinous —
Young Beggar. Dream-daft old man, put fancies by.
Wits, wits, old man, are what we need.
There's a city learning its last of good
And the time is come to drink and feed,
And there's pence for wits —
Old Beggar. One day I stood
At dusk in the golden harvest lands,
And watched the sickles rise and fall,
And the following women with patient hands

Gleaning all, gleaning all.
And the pigeons slept in the pines, and the sound
Of leaves and waters grew strange and clear,
And trouble had died, and I had found
Peace, O Lord, as here.

(*He has risen, bows to the God, and sits below the figure, untroubled.*)

Young Beggar. It is dying, dying, that city.
(*He turns to the other.*)
How
Can a man keep sharp in the mind, and spring
On chance when it comes, with a patchy cow
For mate, a soft and humble thing?
Nimble fingers, a hand to strike,
Then — money, money . . . blast you, speak,
You, mild as a bee, old butcher shrike [1]
Has pegged on a thorn . . . what do you seek
In the eyes of a copper image, made
By some juggling fellow with fancy brains?
(*He stares at the God.*)
All right, old image, I'm not afraid . . .
I'm not for your flock . . . the belly's pains
Are masters may not be served by sleep . . .
Old drowsy god . . . I must fight, and plan,
And lie, and be cunning, and peer, and creep —
For starving's a dirty death for a man.

Old Beggar. There's many a man with a buzzing hive
Of thoughts in his brain that are nothing at all.

[1] *Shrike*, a species of thrush, called *butcher bird;* often impales its prey on thorns.

Young Beggar. Be still! . . . You dead-alive
Old grinning god, I'm what you'd call
A fellow with gift of argument,
And I tell you he should be hurrying now,
Ransacking the world, not a mere consent,
A space unpeopled, a rusty plough . . .
Life is a matter of shouting and haste,
You quiet, old seducing thing . . .
Why won't you shout? . . . You muddy-faced
Old silence . . . silence . . . beggar-man, king . . .
Victuals and void . . . sharp stones and boots . . .
A coat and nakedness . . . rain and sun . . .
A thistle that's blown and a thistle with roots . . .
All right, old god . . . all's one, all's one.

(*He sits beside his fellow, composed. An exhausted* SOLDIER, *who has been out from the city, reconnoitering, comes in, watching the distances.*)

Soldier. Have you seen a king in golden gear
And a great host moving to bring us aid? (*A pause*)
Are you drunk, or daft, or won't you hear?

(*He moves up the bank, and looks down to the city; then, fixedly, at the God; a pause.*)

Old god of quiet, you've lost your trade.

(*An old man from the city comes in hurriedly. The Soldier comes down.*)

Soldier. News — what news from the city walls?
Citizen. An arm-thrust more and the city falls.
Is there sound or sign of the swords of the king?
Soldier. No sound, nor sign.

Citizen. That life should bring
Her comely days to so bad a close;
Have you sought them far?
Soldier. There are watchful foes
About us — I dare not set my feet
Beyond this place.
Citizen. And life was sweet,
A good adventure — and now an end
Of pleasant ways between friend and friend.
(*He moves up the bank.*)
O city whose red roofs look to the sea,
Never again your stones shall be
Glad of your children who smite the waves
With oars well swung, (*Coming down*)
and bonded slaves
Shall live to grudge their dead of death.
Soldier. I have fought, and hoped, and spoken well
In the midst of fears, and I'll spend no breath
Nor courage more to dispute with hell.
We're a broken city, and ill's the day;
My dear was hungry, my dear is dead —
And old god Quiet may whistle away
Till the furies are quiet that throng my head.
(*He sits below the God.*)
Citizen. Nay, let your sword be busy down below.
Soldier. My limbs are all bemused. I cannot go.
Citizen. One sword may strike the balance in this doubt.
Soldier. The scales are turned; the city's term is out.
Citizen. And will you choose in this extremity
To creep aside from fate?
Soldier. I only see,

Beyond disaster that I understand
Darkly as men the process of a hand
Obscure in heaven and hell, a little space
For rest, and the remembrance of a face,
And falling sleep, then covering death, obscure
Even as life, unfathomable, sure
As fugitive thoughts that pass and turn again;
Aye, death is dark as is the madness of men,
But life distract is savage in the throat,
A blind uncaptained vigor, and remote
From reason's airy palaces, a way
Teased by a million purposes, till day
Rattles on day in black bewilderment . . .
But death, I think, is quiet, and a spent
Sorrow at least, when every friend is kind,
And fretting worms no more can plague the mind.
Citizen. You yet are young for death.
Soldier. What cause have I
To covet dribbling age who am now put by
Bereaved and broken in my middle years
From life's assembly?
Citizen. Thus is it one hears
From men who are light with weariness.
Soldier. It is so —
I am tired, tired, tired; old god, you know . . .
And much disputing is but foolishness —
A ploughing of sown fields.
Citizen. And in distress
You are afraid.
Soldier. Who tries another's heart
Speaks as a god, and cannot bear his part.

Citizen. Down there for winning is a hero's name.
Soldier. I have endured, and hold it now no shame
To pass forgotten. There is no weight at all
Now in this arm, and where the heroes fall
Should I too join a sorry sword, 'twould be
But boasting in my pale infirmity
Of such immortal courage as shall lose
No virtue being secret. My blood and thews
I have not spared; my mind is easy so;
And, though my friend is death, I will not go
Courting a vain death for my renown.
For every hero compassing his crown,
Darkly in indistinguishable sleep
A hundred lie, and the quick world shall keep
No word of how their hearts were bright, how spent
At last. I am of these, and am content.
Citizen. Aye — it is just a weariness of brain.
Soldier. O lord of quiet, I am yours again,
After confusion, after vanity. (*He turns away to the God.*)
Citizen (*looking down to the city*). All now is done . . .
How long shall succor be . . .
He will come too late, this king who was our friend.

(*There is a pause; then in the distance victorious cries from the besiegers.*)

Voices. It is ours. The wall is breaking. Stricken: send
One thunder more. It falls . . . It falls . . . It falls!
Citizen. The time is come. And bloody burials
Shall take their lamentable toll of days,
And men shall know the sorrow that betrays

Beauty and resolution and the high
Conduct of heart proposing patiently
Desirable shapes wrought out of shapeless dust,
Not scattering of created things. And lust
Of vengeance shall make black the people's mind,
So heavy is their trial, and so blind
Has queer omnipotence set us from his hand.
So death shall have his season in the land,
Distracted death, till life shall come again
As water to the maddened tongues of men
Burnt on the sand of sterile leagues of waste;
And all the words, the tumult, and the haste
That prosper now to feed some curious pride
Shall pass. O quiet god, be satisfied:
The battles fail: your healing eyes endure;
Kingdoms are ghosts: your kingdom is secure.

(*The* KING, *a great captain, moving to the city's relief, enters.*)

King. What on the walls?
Citizen. An end is made.
King (*as to his lieutenants*). Stay you.
(*Looking down to the city*)
Aye, twenty thousand spear,
Which is my measure, might be laid
Threefold in vain against their gear.
(*To his men*) Let all be still. What men are these?
Citizen. Though strange, devout; they worship.
King. Whom?
Citizen. The God of Quiet.
King (*he looks at the God; a pause*). A god who sees

World-weary city at your doom,
Strong king in your victorious hour,
You have endured, and slain, and died,
Poor clay that would excel in power,
Made frantic by some silly pride.
Could you not learn that while we grow
As men, maybe from less to more
While æons over æons flow,
Yet holiest man may move before
His fellows but a single pace,
One flight of thought, and from his tongue
Hardly shall fall a word of grace
More than from any clod among
Sad naturals[1] or runagates?[2]
No. You must still with narrow eyes
Consider how to top your mates
And write your name across the skies;
Nor great for honor your desire,
Nor vision, nor creating song,
But merely for consuming fire,
Sorry possessions, and a strong
Sword that shall rule you know not how,
Judgment, you know not whom to bind . . .
The fruit was full upon the bough,
O spendthrift wind, O spendthrift wind,
Mad hearts, mad world, mad blood of men,
Mad counsels and mad reckoning . . .
You quiet god, I leave again
Their tumult, and to you I bring
Humility, and thought that burns

[1] Fools, idiots. [2] Rascals, vagabonds.

To shape itself and fetter none . . .
We wake, a generation turns,
We learn to love, and we have done . . .
And shall we spend these little days
Disputing till our veins are cold? (*He sits before the God.*)
Citizen. The victor comes.
King. Or comes or stays
It is no matter.
Citizen. I am old —
A spent arm, a mere messenger
Whose errands now are done. At last
I too may rest. (*He sits by the others.*)
King. I wasted where
Shrill madness was; those moods are cast.
(*A moment's pause*)
Old Beggar. It is the quiet mind that keeps
The tumults of the world in poise.
Soldier. It is the angry soul that sleeps
Where the world's folly is and noise;
King. For anger blunts us and destroys.
Citizen. We are little men to be so proud.
Young Beggar. We are fools: what was so long to build
We break.
King. Our praise is for the loud
Tongue and the glib.
Old Beggar. The gentle-willed
We starve, and the prophet's lips are stilled.
King. It is the quiet mind that wakes.
Citizen. The angry soul ever is blind.
Young Beggar. Love is the bowl that folly breaks.
Soldier. Who rules the world the world shall find.

Old Beggar. All wisdom is the quiet mind.

(*A pause again. A* HERALD *comes in.*)

Herald. Are you the king who with his arms was sworn
In succor to this city now forlorn?
King. I am that king.
Herald. And will you yet oppose
My lord of so sure aim?
King. Which of us knows
What is our aim, much less if it be true?
Herald. Will you set for battle?
King. What have I to do
With battles now? I have thought a strange new thing
This day.
Herald. Though some few score may call you king,
My master is a king would make your crown
A twisted slip of brass. Had you gone down
In battle to the city walls, your end
Had been to swell his triumph; nor shall mend
Your case if now you bring your ranks to dare
The fury of his captaincy.
King. I care
For nothing bitter now that men may say.
Quarrels are done.
Herald. My king shall choose a way
Chastising this infirmity of will,
Surely as had his hand been strong to fill
Your armies with disaster had you stood
With your king's name in a king's hardihood.
King. You god of quiet, some day shall men have spent
All the wild humorous blood of argument?

(*The Victorious* KING *comes in.*)

Second King. What of the lord who thought to stride across
My way?

Herald. His valor will bring little loss
To your victorious arms. He has put by
The scepter and the warrior sword, to lie
With beggars mumbling at some idol's feet —
That is the man —

Second King (*to First King*). Fellow, I came to meet
A king in arms — one worthy of my might,
One strong to bear the intolerable sight
Of all my spears a moment ere he fell,
And should no other story be to tell
Save that he too was broken at my heel.
Now, though you slink aside, you yet shall feel
My majesty, the anger of my name . . .
Captive and stripped, you shall be a jest, a shame,
A laughter to my kingdoms and your own,
You faint and thin deserter of a throne,
You spiritless who feared the naked blades . . .
Why did you fear, and cheat me?

First King. Falsehood fades,
And consciousness is full and the world swings true,
And happy vision rides unclouded through
The ordered ranks of circumstance alone
When man of man is patient, and the sown
Harvests of one are gathered to his gate
Uncoveted of any. And the hate
Of blood for blood and bone for bone can find

No habitation in the quiet mind . . .
Why should the lust of man be ever set
To bring his neighbors to the cunning net,
Or drive him headlong howling through his days,
Mad with much labor in disastrous ways,
Till kind oblivion folds him, and he can
Never again be folly's mark?
Second King. Not man,
But life it is that frets us till we die,
Great life that urges, bidding us defy
All who would stand against us, and to spare
Nothing of pain and sacrifice, but dare
Very calamity to let our name
Thrive in the lists of honor.
First King. Though the flame
Of life, of the multitudinous world, is keen
To drive the blood thrilling about us, clean
For all adventure and great knowledge, still
It is man who snares the spirit of man to spill
His fortunate treasure in dispute and vain
Adding of barren gain to barren gain.
And honor that is your hope is but a word
Distract and void to hearts that have never heard
Kindness and contemplation call.
Second King (*to the God*). What bane
Of madness have you planted in his brain?
How have you slacked the heat that should have passed
Defeated to my glory, and how cast
That valor down that should have been my spoils?
Not even a god shall lightly set his toils
Against my triumphs . . .

First King. Why do you rail?
Is it always so in your restless mind,
That ever your words must rattle as hail
On gods and men? Can you never find
That center of thought where life is thrilled
As a world of wings plying the air,
A million pulses that beat, and build,
Of the flowing arcs that are weaving there,
A perfect balance — a motion due
As ever the tides of the sea have known,
True as the flight of a god is true,
Yet sweet and still as the carven stone . . .
Second King. Will you fight?
First King. Your word brings back to me
Swords, and blood . . . and forgotten things,
As sometimes, out of a scent maybe
Of moss on a wall in April, springs
To a moment of life, that is born and sped
In a curious flavor of the mind,
Some buried hour from the years long dead —
So much is your word, but this.
Second King. They find
Who speak me so that they speak not well.
First King. O quiet god, I will speak no more.
Second King (to the God). O quiet god! And the day shall tell
Of a god no less than a man who bore
His will against mine and repented it —
You have thought to subdue with your quiet eyes
The prey of my sword, you have thought to sit
And govern by peace, while I must rise

"Will you fight?"

And stride through the world and sweat and bleed
To gather my gains, and the man shall take,
Who should measure his might against mine, a creed
That tricks my glory, my will for the sake
Of a sleepy vision! A god may rule
As he will in some heaven with gods to hear;
But a god who comes between men is a fool,
And a fool is little enough to fear.

(*He drives his dagger to the God's heart. The God rises, and speaks, swaying.*)

The God (*crying out*). Not one of you in all the world to know me.

(*The God falls headlong. All rise. There is silence for a moment.*)

First King (*fiercely*). Why did you do it?
Second King. He was a bad god —
A sly god and slothful — an evil liver —
First King. Why did you do it? He was a friendly god,
Smiling upon our faults, a great forgiver . . .
He gave us quietness —
Second King. I say that he's well dead —
First King. And I curse you for the killing,
(*He draws his sword.*)
and here I swear
To requite the honor of this god ill bestead
By a braggart king.
Second King (*drawing his sword*). So ho! at last you dare
To stand again as a man — my cony, come —
You shall die well, being slain by me.

Young Beggar (*to Old Beggar*). Can he do
As he said and avenge the god? (*They talk together.*)
Second King (*to Herald*). Trumpet and drum
Bid all to arms!

(*The Herald gives the signal, and they sound to arms.*)

First King (*to soldier*). And bid my armies, you —

(*The Soldier does so. The Old Beggar raises the head of the fallen God in his arm, the Kings facing each other with drawn swords, trumpets and drums sounding from both armies. All go off, the Kings fighting, and for a moment nothing is heard save the clashing of their swords.*)

Old Beggar (*looking into the face of the fallen God*). Not one of us in all the world to know you.

(*Cries and the noise of arms break out again as the curtain falls.*)

THE WHITE HAWK

BY

HARRY KEMP

Reprinted from *Boccaccio's Untold Tale and Other Plays* by special arrangement with the publishers, Brentano's, New York.

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

FREDERICK	The lover
GIOVANNA	The woman loved
ALBERT	Friend of Frederick
PETRO	Old man servant of Frederick
A MESSENGER	
A NOTARY	

TIME: Thirteenth Century A.D.

THE WHITE HAWK

SCENE: — *Interior of a farm-cottage at the village of Campi, just outside Florence.*

(*As curtain goes up* ALBERT *and* FREDERICK *are discovered talking.*)

Albert. Fie, there are other women in the world!

Frederick. I grant that other beings walk abroad
Who bear the semblance and the name of Woman,
But when compared with her, the one I love,
Who holds my very life in small, white hands,
I would not call them women, so high a quality
Her being Woman gives to Womanhood!

Albert (*contending*). Aye, this same Madame Giovanna whom you love —

Frederick (*interrupting*). Speak not one word against her, as you prize
Continuance of our friendship.

Albert. "Love's a madman,"
One of our poets sings. . . . I well believe him,
For now your face is like a thunder-cloud
And our communion of ten sacred years
Stretches to breaking, because I have dared
Apply truth's bitter caustic to your wound. . . .

(*A pause . . . resuming with great feeling*)

But, dear friend, harken once more to my words! . . .

Frederick (*irritably*). Not one word more, or, by the one I love —

Albert (*resuming, persistently*). Have we not ridden, hunted, hawked together,
And in enraptured interchange of dreams
Lived beardless youth out into bearded manhood?

Frederick (*moved*). Aye, my friend!

Albert (*eagerly seizing the advantage gained*). Then grant me further license!

Frederick (*wearily*). Speak, though you try my patience.

Albert (*with renewed insistence*). This Giovanna —
For full five years already
You have served her faithfully as saints serve God —

Frederick (*eagerly breaking in*). Like theirs, my service only sought to give.

Albert (*triumphantly*). But even the saint, however sad he be,
Hugs promises of heaven to his heart —
Yet you — you love on without hope of bliss. . . .
What has she brought to you, your Giovanna? —
Her sole return has been your constant woe.

Frederick. Of my own making, since she loves me not.

Albert. Loves you not? If 'twere only that, poor friend:
But she's the soul of vanity! —

Frederick (*quickly*). Try me no further!

Albert (*determined to continue in what he holds as his duty to a friend*). Then answer me this question — if I lie,

Why bide you here in this poor, boorish place
Who last year were the richest man in Florence?
Frederick. You know well —
Albert (*pressing the advantage*). Aye, I know too well. . . . (*A pause*)
O Frederick,
Leave off this madness, grow yourself again. . . .
You have held tourneyings and jousts for her,
Have flung your gold and silver to the stars
And all the scattering winds, for wealthy feasts
Served up to multitudes, that she might sit
A remote guest, in the same room with you . . .
And, all the while, she never glanced your way
With one soft eyebeam — seldom spoke, unless
To thank you with those few, accustomed words
That guests return ere link-boys[1] light them home.
Frederick. How could she know that all was done for her? —
My spendthrift feasts, my tourneyings, and jousts!
Albert. What folly, when all Florence knew and laughed! . . .
Why, even to-day, the very urchins sing
A scurrilous song about you, and your palace
(Which your rich money-lender squats in now)
Is shown to travelers as "Lover's Folly"! . . .
How could she help but know? . . .
Month after month she came, like Cruelty's self,
To endless feasts and dizzy carnivals,
Thankless, aloof, and mute. . . .

[1] Attendants who carry torches of tow and pitch.

Frederick (*somberly*). Enough, I pray you! . . .
(*With sober joy*)
Now that my feasts and jousts are over with,
Now that my fortunes and my lands are gone —
Albert (*breaking in*). — At last you see your folly? —
Frederick (*with a quiet, assured gesture*). I only mourn
That there is no way left to serve her more.
Albert. Poorer than is the one poor, aged man
Who serves you out of faithfulness and love,
Here are you stayed — one last, lorn plot of ground,
One rush-thatched cottage left, of your inheritance. . . .
Why, even your hawks, that soared heaven's blue for you,
Your hawks you loved so much —
Are sold — except, they tell me, you have kept
That milk-white falcon you prized most —
Frederick (*greatly moved, with a motion of the hands to beg off further talk on that subject*). Albert, you strike my heart a blow you know not.
Albert. And still you love her?
Frederick (*vigorously*). Aye, and now you've said your say,
Here is a thing will make you chide again . . .
This very mid-day Madame Giovanna
Sends word by messenger that she will come
To dine with me (*ecstatically*) — do you hear? (*catching Albert by the shoulders*) — to dine with me? . . .
Face to face . . . here . . . with me . . . alone . . . do you hear, man?
Albert. Why should she come now? What mad whim has moved her
After these months, these years?

Frederick (*with a lover's assurance and faith*). Only this same thing, that my devotion,
Daylong and nightlong, gets into her soul,
And moves her life to softness.
Albert. Believe it not!
Some ladies over-fair thrive on men's torture
As simple village maidens thrive on love —
To such, a broken heart's a sweeter thing
Than music played on harps, — to such, a face
Darkened with blackness of despair is brighter
Than day that dawns upon a storm-wrecked ship
Showing some land-armed harbor waiting calm. . . .
(*Pause*)
She has but thought out some new torture for you!
Frederick (*angrily, at last*). Go! You've maligned the woman that I love
Too long, by your first word. . . . I've been too patient!
Albert (*frightened at the abyss his zeal has led him to, and pleading*). And is our friendship? (*Reaching out his hands*)
Frederick (*harshly*). Let it be henceforth
Avoided like a corpse . . . get hence, I say! . . .
Write nothing to me . . . never speak of me. . . .
Albert (*in despair*). Truly I meant your good in what I urged,
But my friend's zeal made me o'erleap my duty.
Frederick. Were you my right hand, I would cut it off!

(*Albert turns, and sadly goes off. Frederick calls within to* PETRO.)

Petro, have you prepared the dinner well?

Petro (*thinking of former culinary glory, entering*). There was no better cook in Florence, Master.

Frederick (*absently pursuing his train of thought*). For it's befitting that this feast be perfect,
Costliest, yet simplest, that I've ever given.

(*Old servant begins setting table.*)

Petro, of late I have not seen the boy about?

Petro. HER boy, Master?

Frederick. Whose else?

Petro (*hesitating*). Do you wish me to speak, Master?

Frederick. Aye, do so.

Petro. Then, to my mind, she has forbidden him
To play about your fields because she would
Afford no handle for familiar terms
Between herself and you.

Frederick. I love him much,
For he is hers, of her own flesh and blood, —
He has her selfsame quiet, pausing smiles
Like vagrant sunbeams resting in the leaves. . . . (*A pause*)
He could scarce lift my falcon on his wrist, —
Yet what delight was his to see him soar
Sudden and swift into the central sun,
All his white body dipped in shining gold!

(*A pause. Resuming, with a lover's desperation*)

Know you no servants' gossip of my lady?

Petro (*pleased and garrulous*). Aye, Master!
One of her maids . . . told one of her men . . .

Who whispered me — that, since her husband died,
Her two rude brothers do assail her close
With marriage.

Frederick (*all his attention absorbed*). With marriage? . . . and to whom?

Petro. To the old Duke,
Whose eyes can scarce behold a hand to fore
He is so aged . . . but his bags are filled
Till they laugh over with light of florins spilled.

Frederick. Are they not rich enough?

Petro. What man was ever so?

Frederick. But she — will she submit?

Petro. It stands to reason she means not to yield.

Frederick. How so?

Petro. Why else should she remove
From her great palace to this country quiet?

Frederick (*hopefully deluded*). Could it be! . . . perhaps? —

Petro (*with the fond familiarity of a servant grown gray in service*). Ah, Master — still you hope?
Know you not she owns lands adjoining yours —
This little grudging acre that is yours —
And that it is the custom of our time
For ladies green in widowhood to pass
A decent interval afar from courts
After their consort's death? (*Shaking his head wisely*)
How forlorn lovers clutch at hopeless ends —
Cherishing ribbons and small, worthless trinkets,
Thinking them dropped by chance that spells design, —
Hanging upon each word whose turn they twist, —
Content in ever-yearning discontent,

If that same wind that waved about her face
Touch theirs, in passing. . . .

Frederick. Think you she will come soon, as she sends word?

Petro. Mayhap, my Master (*whimsically*), but she knows alone.

Frederick. What, think you, brings her here?

Petro (*shrugging his shoulders*). Anger, that you have taught her boy to hawk. . . .

A whim . . . a wish . . . or love . . . or . . . or . . . (*giving up*) who knows . . .

God knows! . . . and He is not the one to tell!

Frederick. Five times I have looked for her . . .

Go to the door and look again. . . . (*Pushing the old man aside as he starts to obey*)

Nay, I will go!

(*Just as Frederick reaches the door and is about to open it, with his hand on the knob, there comes a knock. He withdraws his hand slowly, then reaching out again, steps back. To old man*)

It is she! . . . Open the door! . . . (*Again pushing the old servant aside, who goes out, shaking his head in doleful humorousness*)

Nay, I will open it myself! . . . Cannot you hear me?

(*Frederick opens the door and* GIOVANNA *is discovered standing before him.*)

Giovanna! (*Kneeling and kissing the hem of her garment*) White star of my dark night!

Giovanna. Drop not so at my feet . . . 'tis I should kneel! . . .

As humbly as a beggar with his bowl
I come to beg a priceless boon of you!

Frederick. Ask what you will and asking makes it yours.

Giovanna. My little Joseph — my son! (*Choking*)

Frederick. Aye, I deemed you took it ill I played with him,
Thinking that I did so to win your heart . . . (*Breaking*)
But seeing him was almost seeing you.

Giovanna. Nay, I know
Your manhood's patent of nobility
Would guard me from insistence of your passion . . .
It was not that . . . but, yestere'en he sickened,
And he lies at point of death, unless — (*halting*)
It is for this, good friend, I come to you.

Frederick. You deal obscurely.

Giovanna. Patient, hear me through
And you will not despise a mother's love.

Frederick. A mother's love? You speak in riddles still.
Ask me my heart out, ask my life of me,
And I shall lay both, instant, at your feet —
As I have ever done, in fact, sweet lady,
Since that first day I looked upon your face
When all the leaves were falling by the well, —
That ivy-covered well . . . you do not know,
Because you did not see me then; it was
Enough that I saw you. . . .
From that time, dayspring dawned not in the east —
But where you are the dawn is, to my soul.

Giovanna. You pardon me the cruelties you've suffered?

Daggers I wielded, half in vanity
And half because the woman's heart of me
Expanded in the sun of adoration? . . .
Frederick. How can I pardon where my punishment
Was the one pleasure life reserved for me? . . .
If you knew how glad I was to see your face,
Only your face, each time —
To hear your lute-like voice
Even though played for others' ears, not mine, —
You would say "Render me what is my due!" . . .
I have my life still left to offer you.
Giovanna. I ask more than your life, — I ask the thing
You love most . . . I came hither to dine
With you . . . I may not tarry . . . my bitter haste
Bids me ask and be gone! . . . for my son's life
Depends upon your gift. Give what I ask
And let me go this once . . . without abiding
To dine, as I promised . . . and I will return . . .
(*slowly*)
And render up to you . . . (*with a sharp breath*) whatever you will!
Frederick. Your love I ask alone.
Giovanna (*sorrowfully*). I cannot give it. . . .
Frederick. 'Tis all I seek.
Giovanna. I do not love you . . . now I would I did. . . . (*Desperately*)
But if you give my asking — (*Stops.*)
Frederick. Giovanna, what?
Giovanna. I will give all a grateful woman can
Who does not love — half from compassion, half because
You save my son's life. . . .

Frederick. O God! (*Falling at her feet. With desperate energy*)
But you must stay and dine with me, Giovanna, —
Feast upon feast I've had set out in gold
And silver, in your secret honor, — but this banquet
Excels for me in price the perfect one
That Cleopatra set for Antony
When she dissolved that pearl worth twenty kingdoms
Into her cup.
Making the wine drunk with the wealth of it. . . .
You ask the thing I love most; I have given it
Already, — eat, or it will break my heart!
Giovanna. I have no appetite for dainties now.
My son's life waits . . . it is your hawk I seek!

(*Frederick gives a motion and look of the most profound despair.*)

Giovanna (*misjudging*). Ah, you begrudge to give it —
When the life of my little boy depends upon it?
Frederick. It is not that, my Giovanna — I have given
My hawk to you already, my white, last hawk,
That solitary seeker of the sun,
That thing that was the heart and life of me,
The white hawk of my love that only soars
The skies, until earth's but a rim below, —
As for that other hawk —
Giovanna (*thinking she is being trifled with*). O cruel lover, —
You speak to torture me . . . but it is fit
You should have your revenge for tossing nights
Alone, thinking of me, for fortunes spent

To no avail in entertaining me. (*Kneeling to him. Wildly*)
But have mercy!
I kneel to you as sinners kneel to God:
My son, tossing in fever, only speaks
Of that white hawk of yours
That you taught him to send against the sun.
He cries and babbles, reaching out his hands, —
"Mother, give me the hawk — give me Frederick's hawk ...
I will be well if you but give it me,
That white hawk that grows golden in the sun."
"Nay, my child, but I cannot give it you!"
And then he turns his dabbled face away —
"Mother, give me the hawk, or I shall die,"
And moans "the hawk," "the hawk," against the wall ...
The doctor says, moreover, though it seem
A mere child's whim — that, such is fantasy,
The child might live if he can have your hawk,
It may be, just to look on once or twice
And then his mind will stray to other toys —
If you will give it me to bring to him —
For this I came, and not to dine with you. ...
I do not love you ... yet I am yours ... do what you will with me ...
Only first give me what my son's life requires!
Frederick (*horror-stricken*). 'Tis a mere child's whim ... 'tis a little thing —
And yet — I cannot!
Giovanna (*astounded at what she considers Frederick's selfish baseness*). "A mere child's whim.". . . Have you no heart? . . . no soul

For God to have mercy on the day you die?
"I cannot"! Horrible man! . . . you never loved me,
Least do you love me now, — there is no hate
So horrible as this denial!
Frederick (*wringing his hands*). O madam, cease — it is not as you think,
The hawk I cannot give — except you dine with me . . .
Giovanna. Very well, I will stay and dine then,
Though every morsel will be death to me. . . .
Frederick. And to me worse than death. . . .
Giovanna. Most cruel man!
Frederick. 'Tis fate is cruel, not I, — why could not mind to mind
Leap over distance! . . . the hawk is dead!

(*Giovanna gives a cry.*)

And serves to make our dinner. It was all I had, —
All I had left to serve you for your feasting . . .
Now, if it had but been like former days . . .
Giovanna. You have slain your hawk for me?
Frederick. That you might feast with me . . . my last, left treasure
Of any value . . . past all valuing, for in it grew my heart. . . .
Was it not fitting
So great an occasion?
Giovanna (*beside herself with grief and instinctive anger*).
God curse you for a fool! (*Breaking down and sobbing*)
You do not love me, never did, or something
Had stayed your hand and saved my Giossue's life.
Frederick. Alas, my love has overleaped itself!

Giovanna. Nay, why should I curse you? . . .
Both of us are but fools of circumstance . . .

(*Mad with grief anew*)

And yet I hate you, for you've slain my son. . . .

(*The door is burst open without ceremony, and a* MESSENGER *pale and disheveled, enters.*)

Messenger. Madam, you are cried after sorely by your son, —
You and the hawk. . . . (*Speechless*)

Giovanna. You need say no further, man . . . go! . . . he is dead! . . .

(*Messenger goes. Beside herself with raging grief, turning to Frederick.*)

You slave! You creature! . . . you have slain my son . . .
The servant came to tell me he was dead —
And dared not!

(*She strikes Frederick, then steps back, aghast at what she has done. He bows his head.*)

Frederick. O unfortunate feast,
Ill-starred and terrible! . . . (*Passionately*)
O Madame Giovanna, —
With nothing in the world, I love you more. . . .
Nay, the last thing I loved is dead but you, —
And now my love is vast as chaos is
Sitting about the Order of the world
As night about a torch set on a tower. . . .

"You need say no further, man . . . go! . . . he is dead! . . ."

Giovanna. Madman! Oh, my poor son, my own, sweet baby, —
Dead because this Love's fool betrayed your life
Because he loved your mother! . . . (*Softening*) Poor poor fool!
Why should I curse him!

Frederick. I am the fool of God, curse Him, not me!

Giovanna (*swaying back to unreasoning anger in a last brief flash*). And so you would add blasphemy to your murder!

(*A knock at the door. As no one bids to come in the door is slowly opened and the* NOTARY *appears.*)

Notary (*not seeing Giovanna*). Is Madame Giovanna here? (*Seeing her*)
Ah, madam!
I met a pale man running, who pointed me this way. . . .
Your brothers send me
To bear a message of delicate import,
Which, briefly —
(For I stand not on ceremony) is this:
That you must marry, — as brothers, with the law,
The laws of Florence holding up their hands,
They so insist, straightway.

Giovanna (*hysterical*). Marry! . . . Marry! . . .
Slave of two thieves that call themselves my brothers,
I will not marry, carry that word to them.
Dare you come now, my little Giossue dead! . . .
But I must go to him — I — I — (*Starting out, dazed*)
I am no mother to have tarried so.

Notary (*heavily*). You will not marry?

Giovanna. Harsh, unfeeling slave,
Yet a fit servant to my brothers so, —
Out of my way!

Notary (*blocking way*). Curse me as you will! —

Frederick (*rousing*). Let her pass by, man, or — (*Menacing*)

Notary. Nay, my duty's my duty, and the law's the law,
And I must bring her promise back this day —
I must do as bid, or perish else . . .
I serve hard men who love an unsheathed knife.

Frederick. 'Tis hard indeed, but you should choose your service. (*To Giovanna, still hoping in his despair*)
Giovanna, ere you go, exact from me
Whatever service that a broken man
May give . . . nay, take my life beneath your feet.

(*Notary starts to go, but stays by door.*)

Giovanna (*softly*). Frederick!

Frederick (*surprised and unbelieving*). Aye, Giovanna?

Giovanna. Forgive the frailty of my moment's madness . . .
Forgive the frailty of my mother's sorrow. . . .
I, too, have nothing, now, with all my lands.

Frederick. You have my love still, that, like the white hawk,
Soars the eternal skies of constancy,
Undying and forever. . . .

Giovanna (*coming to him*). Noblest of men —

Frederick. White jewel of all women —

Giovanna. I am purged clean of filthy vanity.
I will give you all, for I am yours alone.

Notary (*who has, all this while, instead of going out, tenaciously stayed unnoticed at the door, pleading to Giovanna*). I pray you, give me word to carry back!

Frederick (*menacing and indignant at not having been alone with Giovanna during their discourse together*). Sirrah, I deemed that you had gone from hence!

Notary. I think that they will like this less than "no." (*Goes.*)

Giovanna (*dropping her head on Frederick's breast*). O my true lover! (*After a pause — weeping*) O my little Giossue!

CURTAIN

APPENDIX

THE LITTLE THEATRE

"Great things from Little Theatres grow," comments a critic in discussing new phases of the drama in New York. True it is that the noblest products of the recent drama revival have sprung from the soil of the Little Theatre. The new art, exemplified in the Jones-Hopkins-Barrymore productions of *Richard III* and *Hamlet*, had its beginning in the back room of the Washington Square Bookstore where Robert Edmond Jones wrought impressionistic settings out of window curtains and strips of wrapping paper. The aspirations of the Theatre Guild, New York's most distinguished producing group, realized recently in the dedication of its own theatre, were born in the same back room less than a decade ago. The Neighborhood Playhouse founded on the East Side in 1915, and now one of the most successful experimental theatres in the country — called by Galsworthy, "the house where magic has come to stay" — had its origin in the dramatic cravings of the Henry Street Settlement. And about ten years ago America's now best known dramatist modestly carried a bundle of one-act plays to a Cape Cod fish house transformed by the Provincetown Players into the Wharf Theatre. There to the orchestration of the beating surf, Eugene O'Neill's one-act plays of the sea were first produced.

Fostered by the Little Theatre, the one-act play has during the last decade achieved significance as a specific type of drama. From its humble position as a curtain raiser, and still more lowly environment of the vaudeville circuit, it has gained an honored position on the stage. As a distinct literary and dramatic entity, it has been accorded a place in the curricula of colleges and schools; and a considerable body of theory has already grown up around it.

The Little Theatre has stimulated the writing and staging of the one-act play because the latter is the natural unit of production in the Little Theatre. Here, the actors, for the most part amateurs, cannot put forth the long sustained effort necessary in a full-length play. Moreover, a program of three or four one-act plays permits several groups to work independently and furnishes wider opportunity for experimentation on the part of playwrights, stage-designers, and actors.

The question regarding the exact relation between the Little Theatre and the one-act play seems about as difficult to answer as the ancient query about the hen and the egg. The relation, after all, may not be one of cause and effect. It is possible that both the Little Theatre and the one-act play, as well as the new stagecraft, are all aspects of a single movement. There is no doubt, however, that these have reacted powerfully on one another; and these vital elements in the present drama revival are now so closely entwined, that a clear understanding of the development of the one-act play cannot be had without at least a brief consideration of the Little Theatre and the new stagecraft.

The Little Theatre began in a reaction against the standards set by the commercial theatre, and has, therefore, among other things been called "the theatre of revolt." The principal evils of the commercial theatre are: the star system, the long run, the striving for enormous popularity, the repudiation of literary drama, the lavish and tasteless realism in stage setting, and dedication to box office receipts. Big business in the form of theatre syndicates is averse to experimentation by aspiring playwrights or innovators of the new stagecraft, which might prove a financial failure.

The quarrel with the commercial theatre, it should be noted in this connection, is not that it is a money-making enterprise but that it tends to degrade art into "the amusement business." Helen Arthur, Director of the Neighborhood Playhouse, speaking recently on this subject, compared the art of the theatre to a living organism and the commercial theatre to a parasite that had fastened itself upon the body of art. And just as a healthy organism strives to throw off the parasite that would feed upon and destroy it, so the art of the theatre, innately sound, is struggling to become free from commercial exploitation.

THE LITTLE THEATRE IN EUROPE

The Little Theatre movement is said to have begun with André Antoine's small experimental theatre which he established in Paris in 1887. And here, indeed, we have the inception of the democratic ideals which animate the Little Theatre of to-day: a subscription system, closer intimacy between stage and audience, simplicity in setting,

readiness to experiment with new in both drama and stagecraft. And with the establishment of the Little Theatre, came the fine literary one-act plays of Europe, among which Maeterlinck's little one-act classics were the first.

By the end of the century the Little Theatre movement had spread over Europe. Several figures who have since won world renown, came at this time under the banner of the insurgent theatre. In Russia, Stanislavsky gathered a company of amateurs and in 1890 established the Moscow Art Theatre. Under the influence of this theatre Chekhov wrote his greatest plays (see page 378), and his name has become as inseparably linked with the Moscow Art Theatre, as O'Neill's with the Provincetown Players. Stanislavsky's company toured Europe in 1896. About the same time, Reinhardt and his coterie known as the *Schall und Rauch* group were meeting in a Berlin restaurant where they gave one-act plays. Out of this group sprang the first Little Theatre in Germany. After Reinhardt became director of the *Deutsches Theater*, he still clung to the idea of intimacy between players and audience, and alongside of his larger theatre, he established his *Kammerspielhaus*.

During the last decade of the century, the Irish Players found themselves in the throes of the Celtic Renaissance. The Little Theatre idea, merged with the ideal of nationalism, resulted in 1899 in the Irish Literary Theatre, and, five years later, in the Abbey Theatre. It is directly to the Irish dramatic revival that we owe the one-act plays of Yeats and Lady Gregory as well as those of Synge and Dunsany, all of whom wrote their first plays for production in the Irish Theatre.

THE LITTLE THEATRE IN AMERICA

It was, undoubtedly, through the Irish Players that the Little Theatre movement reached the United States. In 1903 Yeats paid us a visit, and in 1911 the Irish Players, accompanied by Lady Gregory, toured this country. In that year, the first Little Theatres in America were founded in the Middle West. The most noteworthy and most picturesque were: the Chicago Little Theatre under direction of Maurice Brown; the Playhouse at Lake Forest, Illinois, a dwelling-house turned into a theatre; the Wisconsin Players at Madison; the Little Country Theatre at Fargo, North Dakota. The dramatic wave, once having broken, penetrated cities and hamlets, universities and schools. In five years there were more than fifty Little Theatres in the United States.

THE LITTLE THEATRE IN NEW YORK

The full impact of the Little Theatre movement did not strike New York till 1915, when three of the most interesting and significant dramatic organizations sprang into being. These three differ somewhat in the circumstances and ideals governing their inception, but are representative of types to be found throughout the country.

The Washington Square Players started with a group of writers, artists, and theatre lovers who used to meet in the cozy backroom of the Washington Square Bookshop. The first performance was an impromptu affair. The play was Dunsany's *Glittering Gate*, and the setting was improvised by a young man named Robert Edmond Jones, who "forthwith made eternity's walls out of window

curtains." A witness, however, affirms that, "An open window at the back, through which penetrated the dim illumination of Macdougal Street, served to give an impressionistic impression of heaven. For properties, Mr. Jones, with the inspiration of the impressionist, rolled long strips of wrapping paper into wands."

This group of theatre enthusiasts soon after rented the Bandbox for Friday and Saturday nights. The program at the Bandbox usually consisted of four one act plays by American and foreign authors. Among the writers belonging to this group, who contributed one-act plays many of which have become Little Theatre classics, three have become quite prominent: Edward Goodman, Lawrence Langner, and Philip Moeller. In their brief career ending with America's entrance into the war, the Washington Square Players produced more than fifty one-act plays. The subsequent adventures of this organization belong to the story of the Theatre Guild now recognized as New York's most able producing group.

The origin of the Provincetown Players was almost contemporaneous with that of the Washington Square Players — the air of Greenwich Village seemed full of Little Theatre projects. The organization of this group, however, was due to the efforts of one man, George Cram Cook, a scholar and writer, who desired to found a Little Theatre "distinctive of America." The first experiments were made in Provincetown, where an old fish house, metamorphosed into the Wharf Theatre, served as a laboratory for aspiring playwrights who wished to produce and act their own plays.

Harry Kemp, a member of this group, relates vividly

how a strange, sun-tanned, reticent young man arrived at Provincetown one day, and timidly offered a sheaf of one-act plays printed at his own expense. And here, "with the wash of the tide as orchestra, Eugene O'Neill's plays of the sea knew their first production." [1]

The Wharf Theatre was essentially an experimental playhouse, and the plays "tried out" were later given at the Macdougal Street Theatre. Most of the one-act plays produced by the Provincetown Players were written by their own members. Noteworthy among these was Susan Glaspell, who contributed a number of one-act plays. The best of these are among the finest plays in the language. Constance Mackay in her *Little Theatres of New York* mentions eleven original one-act plays which had their first production at the Wharf Theatre during the summer of 1916, and names thirty one-act plays by native authors given during the winter of 1916–1917. Up to the present time, the Provincetown Players [2] have produced almost one hundred one-act plays written by Americans.

The Neighborhood Playhouse, another of the Little Theatres founded in 1915, represents a somewhat different aspect of the Little Theatre movement. It was born of the dramatic aspirations of the community, which first found expression in the Festival Dances of the Henry Street settlement, and later in the Neighborhood Players of

[1] Harry Kemp, Introduction, *Boccaccio's Untold Tale and Other Plays*.

[2] The Provincetown Players were reorganized in 1923 by Eugene O'Neill, Robert Edmond Jones, and Kenneth Macgowan, who are at present directing both the Provincetown Playhouse and Greenwich Village Theatre.

Clinton Hall. The Neighborhood Playhouse was the first theatre to popularize Dunsany's plays in America. During its first season the Neighborhood put on *The Glittering Gate* and sent Dunsany a model of the stage setting. He was so pleased with this that he sent back a new play, *A Night at an Inn.* This play, as well as *The Queen's Enemies*, had its first performance on the East Side. Lord Dunsany himself came to the Neighborhood Playhouse to witness the production of *A Night at an Inn* and was delighted.

In the playhouse on Grand Street, the hopes of its founders have been fully realized. This "cosmopolitan community center of drama" now combines in its organization a workshop, a training school, a permanent repertory company, and a subscription audience. The Neighborhood Playhouse now proudly claims to be the oldest experimental theatre in the country.

Among the innovations wrought by the insurgent theatre, none perhaps was quite so ingenious as Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre. This theatre is portable and can be set up in any large hall. It has one simple setting with curtained doors right and left and with a large arch at the rear. The atmosphere appropriate to the play is produced by the scene set in the archway, and by the use of colored lights.

Financially unable, as he confesses, to pay royalty for plays for the Portmanteau Theatre, Mr. Walker was compelled to write plays of his own. These one-act plays bear the same stamp of originality that characterizes this theatre. They are published under the title of *Portmanteau Plays.*

COLLEGE LABORATORY THEATRE

The universities, though slow in responding to new and insurgent movements in art, were not able to prevent the influence of the Little Theatre movement from trickling in. Professor George Pierce Baker,[1] the noted pioneer in university playwriting, was one of the first to found a college theatre laboratory. Beginning modestly in 1912 in a stable, he has made the 47 Workshop "the most widely known course in any American curriculum." In the 47 Workshop the students not only became familiar with the principles of playwriting, but received practical experience in all elements of play-production. The efficiency of the theatre laboratory method of teaching the dramatic arts has now been fully vindicated. The 47 Workshop has turned out some of the most noteworthy of our playwrights, actors, and designers, and has made a fresh and vivid contribution to our dramatic literature. *Plays of the 47 Workshop* have been published in four series.

Among the eastern colleges, Dartmouth and Carnegie Institute were the first after Harvard to establish laboratory theatres; and Carnegie Institute was the first to give a bachelor of arts degree in the drama.

The college theatres of the West and South are in some respects even more inspiring and significant, in that they combine the laboratory feature with the community or *folk-theatre* ideal. One of the most distinguished representatives of the folk-theatre movement is Professor

[1] Professor Baker has recently resigned from Harvard to become head of the newly endowed Department of Dramatic Art at Yale.

Frederick H. Koch of the University of North Carolina. Professor Koch is a pioneer in the true sense of the word, as his labors in this field began more than twenty years ago, and in a region far removed from established dramatic centers. In 1905 he founded the Dakota Playmakers at the University of North Dakota. He left in 1918 to transplant the idea of playmaking to the South, but his ideals were continued in Dakota by his associate, Professor Franz Rickaby.

As Professor of Dramatic Literature and Director of the Carolina Playmakers, Frederick H. Koch has made the college laboratory theatre a quickening influence in the development of community drama and the American folk-theatre. His aim is to make the theatre at Chapel Hill a "radial center for the dramatic activities of North Carolina."[1] To meet the demand for guidance in dramatic expression, he has organized a Bureau of Community Drama as a unit of the Extension Division of the University. This bureau aims to make its instruction in playmaking real and practical; it sends out a dramatic director to any community in North Carolina to give assistance in the writing, staging, and production of plays and pageants. The bureau seeks further to encourage dramatic art in the schools and communities by a series of state-wide contests in the writing of one-act plays, and by a State Dramatic Competition held annually at Chapel Hill in connection with the Dramatic Institute.

In their desire to help North Carolina to find self-expression through folk-plays, the Playmakers have developed remarkable talent for representing not only native his-

[1] Introduction, *Carolina Folk-Plays*, second series.

torical material and local tradition but present-day life also. Professor Koch has edited the *Carolina Folk-Plays* in two series, in which he has included interesting and valuable matter on "Playmaking" and "Folk-Theatres." The plays, themselves, have aroused warm praise not merely as significant bits of drama, but as "veritable folk-plays, as native and indigenous to American soil as are the plays of Colum or Synge to Ireland." [1]

The influence which the Carolina Playmakers and Dakota Playmakers have extended to other states will serve to show how the folk-play and folk-theatre movement is finding its way into all parts of this country. Professor Franz Rickaby, Director of the Dakota Playmakers, has carried the playmaking idea to Pomona College, California, where the students have written and staged original plays of California life. Similarly, one member of the Dakota Playmakers became founder of the Penn State Players, and one of the Carolina Playmakers organized the Wyoming Playmakers, who have produced a number of Wyoming folk-plays. Mr. Heffner has now launched the Arizona Playmakers at the University of Arizona with original Arizona folk-plays written and produced by his students there.

Allied with the foregoing in spirit are certain non-university groups, such as the Indiana Little Theatre group and the Wisconsin Players. To the latter belongs Zona Gale, who in her one-act folk-plays (*Neighbors* is the best known) has transcribed the characteristics of Middle Western life with remarkable faithfulness and charm. All of these groups as well as a host of others are

[1] Lloyd Morris in *The International Book Review.*

not only making a real contribution to our dramatic literature, but are giving sincere expression to the traditions and aspirations of our richly varied American life.

THE NEW STAGECRAFT

The Little Theatre not only gave a vital impulse to the writing of drama, but has been a quickening force in the development of the new art of the theatre. The Little Theatre is by its very nature predisposed to innovations and is economically adapted for experimentation. Robert Edmond Jones, as has been noted, had his first opportunity to try out his idea in the back room of the Washington Square Bookstore. Lee Simonson directed the stage setting for the Theatre Guild. Sam Hume, as Director of the Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit, developed Gordon Craig's theories of the plastic stage. The career of Max Reinhardt as master craftsman of the stage had its beginning in his *Kleines Theater* and *Kammerspielhaus.*

In a general way, the new art stands for simplicity, beauty, and suggestiveness as opposed to the cluttered, tasteless, and lavish realism of the past. The new idealism demands *stimulation* instead of *illusion;* the *presentation* of the *spirit* of things rather than the *representation* of the *things themselves.* Scenery may be decorative and frankly conventional or it may be plastic (three dimensional). Draperies, color, light and shade, an arch, a single pillar, may with proper treatment be made to suggest the outward form and to yield the inner meaning of things.

Arthur Hopkins, the producer, according to Kenneth

Macgowan,[1] has done most, in a practical way, for the progress of the new stagecraft in the commercial theatre; he has stated the case against realism most effectively in *How's Your Second Act?*

"An attempt at exact reproduction challenges the . . . mind of the audience to comparison. . . . If a Childs restaurant in all its detail is offered, it remains for the audience to recall the memory photograph of a Childs restaurant and check it up with what is shown on the stage. . . . The result of the whole mental comparing process is to impress upon the auditor that he is in a theatre witnessing a very accurate reproduction, remarkable only because it is not real. So the upshot of the realistic effort is further to emphasize the unreality of the whole attempt, setting, play and all. So I submit that realism defeats the very thing to which it aspires. It emphasizes the faithfulness of unreality."

The foregoing somewhat condensed statements of the theory of the new stagecraft may become clearer in the light of certain practical developments.

Setting. The new art has banished the conventional painted backdrop, since the artificial perspective of the drop must always be at greater or lesser variance with the real perspective of the stage. In many of the little theatres this set has now given place to a plaster back, dome-shaped on top, called by the Germans, *Kuppel-horizont.* This is capable of taking on the varied hues of the sky from lights projected through colored glass or gelatin screens. The dome tinted with colored light gives a remarkable illusion of distance. Forms of distant ob-

[1] *The Theatre of Tomorrow,* page 19.

jects or objects seen by moonlight may be made to melt beautifully into the hues of the sky by applying appropriate designs to the medium through which the light passes. The Neighborhood Playhouse was the first of the Little Theatres to use the plaster back or *Horizont.* The Triangle Theatre on the lower West Side is another one using it with remarkably artistic effects. The device may be studied here to the best advantage, as the Triangle is a tiny theatre (it seats about eighty people) with a corresponding tiny stage. The objection to the *Horizont* is that it is a permanent obstruction. To obviate this difficulty, the *cyclorama* has been invented; it is made of canvas or silk and so prepared that it refracts light about as well as plaster does.

The reaction against false perspective and two dimensional scenery resulted in what is called the "plastic stage," where the settings are in three dimensions. "When I came to design scenes for myself," said Craig,[1] "I avoided putting any place in my picture which could not be traveled into actually by the actors." This theory was demonstrated effectively by Lee Simonson on the stage of the Garrick Theatre. The scene of the railroad embankment in *Liliom,* in the opinion of Kenneth Macgowan, has probably been unmatched for plastic beauty and completeness and illusion. Through the medium of gauze and dim lights, Simonson threw back the horizon line and accentuated space by showing the distant spires and chimney tops through the great opening of a shadowed arch (in the foreground) which penetrated the embankment.

[1] *Toward a New Theatre.*

But the very success of these devices, the completeness of the illusion, again made the idealists dissatisfied. This smacked too much of realism. Success in representing the surface appearance of things set the audience to thinking of the device. And to lull them into a state of complete illusion meant a deadening of the imagination.

Craig attempted to escape entirely from representation by devising permanent sets which could by different formal arrangements be made to fit various plays. In 1912 he devised for the production of *Hamlet* a set of screens in various sizes which could be arranged in a variety of shapes. While the experiment was fairly successful, the screens were not found available for other productions.

Sam Hume, a pupil of Craig's, devised an ingenious set which may be considered a kind of compromise between the formal and plastic. He built out of canvas, on wooden frames, fourteen units comprising four columns, two canvas flats, three sections of stairs, three platforms, and two folding screens. Out of these units, with the addition of two silhouette tree forms and two curtains, he made in one season sets for eleven different plays. The scenes produced differed widely, ranging from a Spartan palace (*Helena's Husband*) to the gate of Heaven (*The Glittering Gate*), yet each set appeared as if it had been built especially for the scene which it represented.

The most satisfactory and artistic adaptation, perhaps, of Craig's theory of permanent setting was made by Robert Edmond Jones for the Barrymore-Hopkins productions of Shakespeare. In *Richard III* the old Tower of London formed a permanent background. In street scenes and other exteriors, the gray walls and yawning

gate of the tower appeared clearly. For interior scenes, a platform with a rear curtain suggested a palace, an iron cage, a prison. But, however masked, in every scene, part of the dark forbidding tower appeared, — a dread, enveloping atmosphere of the bloody drama. In a similar manner *Hamlet* also was produced in a permanent setting. Corresponding to the tower in *Richard III* there was in the *Hamlet* production a suggestion of a lofty hall, rude and massive, with a huge arched opening at the back and high windows at the sides. Here, again, the various scenes were indicated by the addition of simple properties, by the use of front curtain and a fore-stage, and by skillful manipulation of lights. No attempt was made in any of the scenes to create the illusion of surface reality.

Mr. Jones' setting in each of these productions of Shakespeare's plays was an interesting and convincing example of impressionism. Here, also, he worked in harmony with the theories of the new art of the theatre. His aim was to suggest the spirit of things rather than to represent the things themselves, to stimulate the imagination rather than to produce illusion, to generate a mood that would be in accord with the spirit of the drama.

Lighting. A discussion of the new stagecraft, no matter how brief, demands some reference to lighting. In the little theatre, lighting has become one of the determining esthetic factors in successful play production. In fact, Adolph Appia, who was the first to write on the subject, ascribed to lighting as important a place in connection with the drama as music holds in connection with opera.

Lighting was regarded at first merely as an illuminating agent, and was furnished mainly by the footlights. But

this sort of light caused unnatural shadows and gave to stage setting and faces of the actors a flatness that detracted from the esthetic and dramatic qualities of the play.

The modern evolution of lighting has made it, first, a plastic agent that brings out the light and shade of perspective in setting and players; secondly, a decorative factor, that enhances beauty in costumes and scenery; thirdly, a symbolic medium, that suggests and emphasizes the spirit and mood of a given scene.

In the working out of these ideas, the tendency of the new art has been toward an elimination of the footlights, partly because the footlights form a barrier between audience and players. These shining troughs have now given place in many of the theatres to border lights, bunch lights, and spot lights that "crisscross" on the stage at various angles. This form of lighting serves to destroy unnatural shadows, and at the same time brings out the three dimensional aspect of objects on the stage.

The Fortuny System is a device whereby the spotlight, instead of being directed toward the stage, is directed in the opposite direction and thrown upon a silk screen. This screen has various colors, and may be raised or lowered (or revolved) according to the color effect desired. The light thrown upon the colored screen and reflected upon the stage has the soft, diffused quality of daylight.

Many lighting devices, employing colored gelatin screens, are used to give color to the stage and to project designs upon the cyclorama. In the smaller theatre a powerful box flood covered with a sheet of gelatin or colored glass produces upon the plaster back or

cyclorama remarkable sky and moonlight effects. The application of appropriate designs to the colored medium yields artistic silhouette forms of various objects, such as trees, shrubbery, or spires, which melt into the soft hues of the sky.

The decorative and emotional aspect of light has become so important that men expert in handling colored lights have become known as "color artists." A "Table of Color Symbolisms" has been worked out by Professor Claude M. Wise [1] which gives the personal and abstract qualities, occupation, seasons, and forces suggested by every one of eleven colors.

Synthesis. The increase in the complexity of the main factors in play production, such as setting and lighting, makes it the more difficult to harmonize these into an effective and artistic ensemble. Just this, however, is one of the essential qualities demanded by the leaders of the new art. Gordon Craig contends that no true work of art can be the product of more than a single mind. He insists, therefore, that one head must be so equipped esthetically that it can direct all the factors of production — drama, setting, lighting, and music — and thus fuse them into an artistic unit.

STRUCTURE OF THE ONE-ACT PLAY

Having won distinction as a literary type, the one-act play must be regarded, along with the sonnet, ballad, and short story, as an art form achieved through the harmonious blending of content and form. Simpler and more concise than the full-length play, though not a bit less

[1] *Dramatics for School and Community*, page 36.

exacting in details of craftsmanship, it offers a splendid opportunity for the study of dramatic structure. The observation is perhaps obvious — that real appreciation and enjoyment of any form of art must come through intellectual as well as emotional channels. In the drama, of course, the human values must remain uppermost; but the process by which these values are clarified also deserve consideration. The student should, therefore, become familiar with at least the fundamentals of dramatic construction.

The first fact to recognize in taking up the study of the one-act play is that it is not a condensed or diminutive full-length play. The one-act play has developed a technique of its own, in some respects more exacting and binding than that of the full-length play. The heart of the one-act play is concentration, singleness of impression, unity. Unity of time and place is of course inherent in the one-act play. It demands, also, unity of plot, unity of character, unity of mood. The full-length play which may concern itself with the events of a lifetime (Arnold Bennett's *Milestones* deals with three generations) is able to show the development of character. The one-act play dealing with the briefest lapse of time cannot *develop*, it can only *reveal* character. The full-length play may at will annihilate time and space; the one-act play is pinned to a narrow locale. With each fall of the curtain, the full-length play affords the audience an opportunity for retrospection. It may review and clarify scenes, resolve difficulties, establish relations, and get mentally "set" for what is to come. In a one-act play, the interest must be continually projected forward. Within all these

limitations, the one-act play must quickly seize the attention of the audience, clarify the situation, and carry the interest along through a properly related sequence of episodes that rise rapidly to a dramatic climax. The one-act play is, necessarily, episodic. This does not mean that it is trivial. On the contrary, the serious one-act play aims to seize a significant and crucial moment, to bring to a sharp focus the cumulative force of character and circumstance, and in a flash, as it were, to furnish a revealing glimpse of the history of a life.

Exposition and Inciting Moment. The beginning of the one-act play consists of the Exposition and Inciting Moment. The Exposition introduces the characters, establishes the relation among them, makes clear the setting, and strikes the keynote of the dominating mood. The full-length play may do this leisurely. The maid, perhaps, while she dusts the furniture, gossips with the butler, and in this way conveys information necessary for an understanding of the situation. *Romeo and Juliet* opens with a brawl between the servants of their respective houses. This acquaints us with the feud between the Montagues and Capulets, and generates an atmosphere appropriate for the action. *Julius Cæsar* begins in a somewhat similar manner. Through the verbal tilts between citizens and tribunes, time, place, and situation are deliberately explained.

In the one-act play the main characters are likely to be immediately engaged in the initial dramatic situation (Inciting Moment). And whatever exposition is necessary is deftly introduced in the dialogue or suggested by preliminary action and other appeal to the eye. The

beginning of *Sham* will serve as an illustration. The opening of this play written after the manner of a full-length play would have been somewhat as follows: Clara and Charles make preparations for leaving the house. They inform the maid they are going to the opera. As the maid retires, they remark on the necessity of impressing servants, and inadvertently reveal that they are really going to the "movies." The couple before leaving also comment on the prevalence of burglaries in the neighborhood and on the nature of the articles stolen. Such a beginning for this one-act play is of course difficult without serious violence to the time element, — several hours elapse between the departure and return of the couple. But, this difficulty aside, such a beginning would be too leisurely for a one-act play and far less effective dramatically than the direct opening we find in *Sham*. For here, the initial situation — exposition through action alone — immediately seizes our attention and projects it forward. The curtain rises upon what seems to be a burglar at work. Any uncertainty regarding him serves only to whet our curiosity. This curiosity is immediately dissipated upon the entrance of the couple, but gives place to a more absorbing question: How will this somewhat unusual situation work out? This is the Inciting Moment.

At this point in every play the action becomes dynamic. Here is a question which demands an answer, a situation which must be solved. Here, the characters are caught in the web of circumstances; their reactions, their ultimate fate become momentous. During the initial situation, our attitude was merely one of curious attention; with the

Inciting Moment (the first dramatic episode) we become emotionally engaged.

Complication. The reaction of character to character, and of characters to circumstance, will, necessarily, develop a second dramatic episode out of the first; and, perhaps, a third out of the second. These successive dramatic episodes must be logically related so that they may be convincing; and must, as they proceed, gain in emotional intensity in order that there may be no falling off in interest. This process forms the "complication." "I know of no play," says Percival Wilde, "lacking complication that has achieved success either in print or before an audience." This complication, it should be noted, is not an artificial device, a piece of technique, but part of a design wrought after the pattern held out by life.

Claudius (in *Hamlet*) voices a recognition of this complexity when he exclaims:

> "O limèd soul, that struggling to be free
> Art more engaged!"

Crisis and Climax. The series of dramatic episodes must finally bring the action to a head where the cumulative force of character and circumstance press for a solution to the problem. This is the Crisis, and the emotional reaction here is one of suspense — "a straining forward of interest." [1] The intensity of this strain is conditioned, first, by the degree of sympathy with, or antipathy for, the characters; secondly, by the degree of uncertainty regarding their fate.

The Crisis in *A Lost Silk Hat* occurs when the Caller,

[1] Baker, *Dramatic Technique*, page 207.

against the fervid appeal of the Poet, decides to ring the bell. The action here reaches a point where a solution is inevitable. Certainty that the fate of the Caller is about to be settled, however, is coupled with uncertainty as to just what that fate will be. The question creates the moment of greatest suspense (Crisis); and the answer to the question (in this case, the ejaculation by the Poet) releases the tension and develops the most dramatic moment of the action — Climax.

The effective climax must combine surprise with conviction. The play may have foreshadowed the nature of the outcome, but emotional preoccupation has for the time blocked pure analysis. After the emotional release comes the pleasure of recognition, if the outcome is valid with reference to character and circumstance.

Resolution. The climax is also the turning-point in the action, and marks the beginning of the resolution. It answers the main question but leaves certain minor ones — bearing usually on the reaction of the characters. The resolution clears up the essential points in the readjustment. In the one-act play, the resolution is necessarily brief. Frequently the physical details in the readjustment do not seem vital, and are left to the imagination of the audience. In that case, the climax involves both resolution and conclusion.

Surprise Ending. The ending of the one-act play may take a turn wholly unexpected in that nothing in the play has foreshadowed it. This is usually brought about by what Percival Wilde calls the "secondary climax" — the culmination of a situation or action unknown to the audience until the end of the play. In *Confessional,* for

example, the logical climax is Baldwin's final revelation of the yielding quality of his moral fiber in the face of temptation. The unexpected message which suddenly brings to Baldwin the realization that his moral surrender was needless is the "secondary climax." This heightens the effect of the previous climax and gives it an ironic twist. This is not a trick ending; it is convincing because it squares with the broader principles governing the larger world of which the characters and action of the play are a part.

CHARACTER

Character is the stuff out of which drama is made. "No play can rise above the level of its characterization."[1] Ingenuity may devise a plot and fit it with conventional types, but the result will be farce or melodrama. Action properly motivated can be understood freely only in terms of character. The student should therefore become familiar with all the means whereby he may come to a true estimate of the characters in the play. (In the one-act play, character is "stationary"; the lapse of time is too brief for development but adequate for revelation.)

Character is usually revealed first by the *appearance* and *dress* of the individual. In *The Diabolical Circle*, the difference in two hats suggests a corresponding difference in their owners, — "Adonijah's prim, Puritanic, severe; Charles' three-cornered, with a flowing plume."

Another method of character portrayal — perhaps the most direct and convincing — is *bearing* and *action*. Note the first appearance of the Princess of Ponderay in *Figure-*

[1] Baker, *Dramatic Technique*, page 248.

heads. "She is lying on a low purple divan . . . absorbed in the contemplation of her bracelets, as she holds her arms in the air and lazily waves them to and fro." Her childish vanity becomes apparent before she has uttered a word.

Self-characterization through dialogue must, of course, not always be taken at face value. When the Princess says, "My subjects! Who are they that they should dictate to me! Am I not an autocrat?" we are not convinced. The lady protests too much, we think. We do learn, however, how the Princess would like to be regarded. In *The Diabolical Circle,* Betty's pert, lively, and humorous replies to her father stamp her at once as vivacious, spirited, and quick-witted; and her subsequent playful and clever antics in the face of an awkward situation are thoroughly convincing as being in character.

Characterization by what others say regarding an individual is as valid as it would be in real life, under similar circumstances. Betty's opinion of Adonijah and of Charles cannot be accepted absolutely because she is an interested party, but may be held tentatively till the characters by their actions either fulfill or discredit the judgment. When the gentleman burglar in *Sham,* however, remarks that Charles is "the only genuine article in the house," his opinion carries conviction, because it is given by one who is both disinterested and competent.

PLOT AND THEME

If character is the stuff out of which drama is made, plot is the design into which the stuff is woven. Plot should not be confused with theme. While plot is the design of the

constructed story, theme is the central idea which the story elaborates, or the fundamental truth which it exemplifies. "A play needs to have a theme," says Brander Matthews; "this theme must be interpreted by a story, and the story must be stiffened into a plot."[1] Plot gives the story form; theme gives it significance. Theme, however, is by no means synonymous with "moral." The theme is inherent in the story but makes no demand to be paraded forth. The "moral" is gratuitous and deliberately attached, much as an imposing label on an inferior article.

ATMOSPHERE

Each scene or locality, by virtue of the nature, appearance, and arrangement of its component parts, arouses a certain sense reaction. This somewhat intangible reality is known as atmosphere. The interior of a church, a deserted house, a classroom — each has its distinctive and easily sensed atmosphere. The ancients, who were disposed to deify all sorts of abstractions, ascribed this phenomenon to the presiding genius of a given place, — *genius loci.*

The atmosphere of a play may be described as the dominating mood which the play generates. In a period play, such as *The Diabolical Circle*, costumes, stage properties, and dialogue are the elements most potent in yielding atmosphere. The quaint, formal, scriptural quality of the speeches, reënforced by the visual appeal of the other factors, immediately creates an appropriate mood. In *Figureheads* the dialogue is modern, since time and place are "anywhere, anywhen." But the prologue conceived

[1] *Principles of Playmaking.*

in a vein of poetic fancy and spoken by "an actor in gorgeous oriental costume," and such details in the setting as, "a low purple divan in a room overlooking the sea," "musicians sitting on the floor," "languorous music," — these immediately create an atmosphere that stirs the wings of our imagination and enables us instantly to reach the "realm of fantasy" in which the kingdom is laid.

THE ONE-ACT PLAY IN HIGH SCHOOL

The one-act play is finding its way into the high school for two main reasons. First, it is helpful, as a vivid phase of contemporary literature, in establishing in the student's mind a relation between literature and life. Secondly, it is the most appropriate medium through which the play urge, quickened by the recent drama revival, can find expression. The tendency in the high school has been — and to a great extent still is — to disintegrate the drama into several functions, and to utilize these separately. In the classroom, as a formal branch of the curriculum, it is carefully studied, minutely analyzed, and in part read aloud. This process — altogether proper and desirable as far as it goes — stopping here, leaves the drama lifeless, — for the soul of the drama is action. As a form of school entertainment, the drama is over-emphasized in the opposite direction; and the theatrical function becomes paramount to the exclusion of all educational and cultural possibilities.

The one-act play, calling for a minimum of sustained effort and at the same time capable of being vital, significant and vigorous, is ideal for fusing all the functions of the drama so that it may become a quickening factor in the

curriculum as well as a vital school activity. To achieve this goal fully, however, dramatics must be accorded a place as an integral branch of high school work and must receive the same consideration by way of equipment that is given to art, domestic science, and manual training.

An experiment in a high school in the West will suggest what might be done along the same line, in other schools. In 1917 a teacher of public speaking, visiting New York from South Bend, Indiana, had the good fortune to witness the opening performance of Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre. Impressed by its exquisite art, she thought, "If this is possible in a dingy settlement gymnasium, why not in our school? Why not rebuild the music room?" The account of the manner in which the stage was rebuilt, lighting installed, and the music room, seating about two hundred people, transformed into a little theatre, is both suggestive and inspiring: "Manual training and forge class, art department and printing, sewing class and physics, all helped to make Our Little Theatre; and as they watched it grow, even the high school children sensed the fact that something was happening in their midst, and that they were lucky enough to be there when it came." [1]

Comparatively few high schools, however, particularly in the East, have achieved little experimental theatres. The method proposed here, therefore, for utilizing the one-act play will be based on resources that are available; it will suggest a manner of correlating work in the classroom and performance on the auditorium stage into one dramatic project.

[1] A complete account of this interesting experiment is given in *The Drama*, February, 1917.

Preliminary Study. As the work must begin in the classroom, it will be necessary to engage the enthusiastic cooperation of all the pupils in the class, and dispel the atmosphere of restraint that hampers spontaneous action on the part of both pupils and teacher. Enthusiasm can be aroused by setting before the pupils a definite and vivid goal which they are anxious to attain, and by making clear the means by which they may attain it. The study of the one-act play may be taken up in class on the assumption that this work is preliminary to, and a preparation for, a school performance in the auditorium, on a given date. After a rapid preliminary reading of the play as a whole, the pupils are ready to consider certain general problems involved. Is it a period or a modern play? Is it poetic, fantastic, or realistic? What will be an appropriate stage setting, and will there be any special problems as regards setting and lighting? The teacher will find it advantageous, at this point, to ascertain what pupils are interested in physics, what pupils are apt in drawing, what pupils are skillful in manual training, and other subjects. The class may then be divided into committees, and each committee assigned a definite problem in the play, to be considered with special reference to the nature and equipment of the school auditorium stage. Most of the pupils, of course, will have only a meager and vague appreciation of stage technique; and their dramatic taste in general will be elementary. This is not at all strange when we consider that regular theatrical productions are beyond the resources of the majority of pupils, and that their chief dramatic inspiration is drawn from the motion picture.

A great deal can be done to remedy this condition

through the agency of a little community theatre or an art theatre. In New York City, in fact, such a move has been made, in at least one instance, by the Little Theatre itself. The Threshold Theatre founded by Clare Tree Major as a "form of laboratory training for the stage" is enlisting the coöperation of the high schools in an endeavor to educate the dramatic taste of young people and to develop a more discriminating theatre audience. Mrs. Major, coöperating with a committee appointed by the English Teachers' Association, has evolved the "High School Theatre Performances" which, given every afternoon and every Saturday during the winter season of 1923–1924, played to more than fifty-five thousand young people.

This affords not only a splendid opportunity for rational enjoyment and for the development of dramatic taste, but gives a chance to those pupils interested in stagecraft to become acquainted with certain fundamentals of stage setting and lighting. Students with a mechanical or scientific bent, who are permitted to study the stage of the little theatre at close range, will grasp essentials quickly, and will show remarkable ingenuity in working out problems on their own auditorium stage. Certain pupils may even be induced to construct a model of the school auditorium stage, and, with the aid of this model, problems of setting and lighting in the production of a given play may be studied effectively in the classroom. Carried on thus, as a real dramatic project, many discussions that would ordinarily seem vague and academic to the class will become definite and vital. Questions on atmosphere, for example, are usually more or less difficult and elusive.

This aspect of the play, however, approached through a tangible medium, such as lighting, will elicit from the pupils most familiar with the play pertinent comments on the nature of the setting, the spirit of the play, and the purpose of the author. The pupils less familiar with the play will realize the need of a more intensive study of the text as well as a more careful scrutiny of stage directions. The class will also be impressed with the close relation of all the artistic media through which the author seeks to produce a single unified impression.

The preliminary reading should also help pupils to get into sympathy with the characters and to visualize the action. Effective dramatic expression requires imagination and feeling, but the proper emotional attitude depends in its turn on clear thinking. To simulate emotion in playing is not always objectionable. It is necessary at times to assume a virtue — or a vice, but to counterfeit emotion about something not clearly comprehended is utterly inane.

To enable pupils to get a better grasp of the play in terms of its dramatic links, to make them feel the "rhythmic waves," it is well to divide the play into situations. Situations are somewhat analogous to scenes in a full-length play. Ordinarily, a new situation arises with the entrance or exit of a character. *Figureheads*, for example, may be divided into at least seven well-defined situations. The first, mainly a dialogue between the Princess and Gertrude, ends with the knocking on the door. The entrance of the guard brings about a second situation which results in the Princess' order for all to leave. This clears the stage for the entrance of the Prince, which brings about the third and most important situation of the play.

A consideration of the play in terms of its situations will serve also to bring out the dramatic value of each part and to determine what feature is to be emphasized. In the opening of *Figureheads*, the conversation is entertaining but trivial, and has no direct bearing on the plot. The main purpose here evidently is to create a vivid impression of the Princess. It follows then that her tone, her manner, her general bearing are aspects which must be noted and properly stressed. The next situation involves important news which has a direct bearing on the plot. Here, the *matter* as well as the *manner* is important, and care must be taken that the necessary information is conveyed clearly to the audience.

Each situation may now be assigned to a group of pupils (or to several groups) to be memorized. Reading the text of the play from the books may be effective as an oral English exercise, but it hampers too much the free bodily response essential in dramatic interpretation. The element of "make believe" is vital in the play urge of older as well as younger children, and will give a zest to the delivery of the lines that will dispel the atmosphere of inhibition that clings to the classroom. Going through a part in a single situation of a one-act play does not call for a long sustained effort, and most of the pupils will be eager to memorize the lines, if they feel that the most promising students will be selected for a class or school performance.

Rehearsing. In directing pupils for a public performance, the "coach" should not become unduly influenced by the feeling that "the play's the thing." A smooth, finished production is of course desirable, but not at the expense of slavish imitation on the part of the players.

The *process* is as important as the *product*, the "why" as essential as the "what" and the "how." The short cut is of course frequently necessary; in minor details, it may even be advisable to anticipate errors rather than to correct them after they have become "set"; but in the main, the director, if he will tax his ingenuity, may bring about by indirect methods results more natural and pleasing. He may suggest to a particular pupil a familiar experience parallel to one that happens to be outside of his range; he may encourage a more active use of the pupils' power of observation; and he may utilize the pupils' predisposition to mimicry and impersonation.

The indirect method by no means excludes an occasional discussion of certain technical aspects of vocal and dramatic effectiveness. While a detailed analysis of or drill in stress, inflection, pitch, tone, and tempo, may tend toward the artificial, the presentation of a few underlying principles will not be unprofitable. Tell a pupil, for example, to say "Come in" to an imaginary visitor whom he anticipates with pleasure. Let him say "Get out!" to an extremely unwelcome caller. It will not be difficult to make the student conscious of the fact that a pleasant emotional state relaxes the muscles of the vocal organs, causing a clear, open, musical tone; whereas a negative emotion, such as hatred, jealousy, fear, causes a "tightening up" of the vocal mechanism which results in gruff, rasping, guttural tones. The recognition of this intimate relation between the emotional and physiological will lead to an obvious conclusion: namely, by knowing how to make the appropriate physical adjustment, by knowing how to put himself into the proper attitude, a player may

be able to induce the right mood. In unpremeditated speech, of course, the emotion always precedes, and colors the tone and expression; but in acting it is important to know how to assume a virtue. It is the recognition of this principle, undoubtedly, that has been responsible for the widespread placarding of the familiar admonition "Smile."

The pedagogical method, of course, has its limitations. The teacher-director, while keenly alive to the cultural value of the *process* in play production, will nevertheless come to a point where he feels that "art is long and time is fleeting." The short cut is then quite in order, and the director may with a clear conscience proceed to demonstrate to the players the thing to be done and the manner of doing it. He should, however, restrain the inclination that sometimes arises when a certain part of the play does not go well, to spend the entire rehearsal period in taking the players through a single situation a dozen or twenty times. This process usually defeats its purpose, for pupils are apt to become dispirited, languid, and mechanical. It should perhaps be noted here that what was said earlier in the chapter regarding the division of the one-act play into situations applies to the preliminary study of the play and not to the later rehearsals. The attempt to perfect the play part by part will cause a waste of time and will not always yield a smooth production. It is advisable as soon as possible to run through the whole of the one-act play, or a sufficient portion to generate a momentum that will dissipate self-consciousness and give snap and zest to the work. In the final rehearsals, the director should accustom the players to respond to suggestions without becoming unduly dis-

concerted and without losing their "cues." He will then be able to lead the cast somewhat after the manner of the conductor of an orchestra.[1] Without interrupting the progress of the rehearsal, he may call on one player for an increase in tempo, require another to hold a pause, and give direction to another for greater intensity. In this way, the director may bring out the dramatic values in the play, give proper shading, and develop climax.

STAGING THE PLAY

Few teachers who direct school dramatics are fortunate enough to have at their disposal a well-equipped stage. Those, however, who are forced to work under adverse conditions and with a minimum of equipment can make a virtue of necessity. The spirit of the new stagecraft, stressing suggestion rather than representation, relieves the amateur stage director from the necessity of straining too much after realism. In poetic and period plays, especially, he may be frankly theatrical. Instead of cluttering the stage with endless details of actuality, which are quite likely to draw attention to themselves and away from the play, he can with a few vivid, concentrated symbols, and the simplest setting, make the stage artistically effective.

Setting. Curtains and draperies are in the long run cheaper, more practicable, and more artistic than the clumsy, conventional sets which soon become worn and dilapidated. A variety of one-act plays, involving scenes that ranged from a forest to a New England kitchen, have

[1] The editor acknowledges to Mr. Clarence Stratton indebtedness for this suggestion.

been produced on the auditorium stage of the Manual Training High School, Brooklyn, with three curtains as the essential part of the setting. The arrangement is as follows: Across the rear of the stage, three feet from the back, is stretched a curtain of brown burlap. This serves as a back drop. Two curtains, each about seven or eight feet wide, are hung three feet in front of the back drop and parallel with it, one at the right, the other at the left of the stage. These form wings which serve as exits and entrances, and provide, besides, convenient nooks for prompter or stage director. This simple arrangement is adapted for exterior as well as interior scenes. Upon the back drop may be applied conventional or decorative designs suggesting the spirit of the play. Vertical strips of dark cloth fastened to the curtain will give the impression of a forest. The same curtain festooned with boughs and green leaves may suggest a garden wall. And the floor covered with dyed excelsior will do very well for green sod.

When the back curtain is used as the rear wall of a room, slight difficulties may occasionally arise. The play may call for an open window or a door with a lock. It is necessary, in that case, to make a gap in the back drop and drape it about a frame or "flat" fitted with a door. One or two wooden uprights placed behind the back drop will steady it, take up slack in the supporting wire or rope, and act as a support when it is necessary to hang a heavy article, such as a musket, mirror, or clock, on the rear wall. Metal standards, usually found on the auditorium stage to hold flags, are excellent for the purpose. Two of these fitted with heavy poles, placed one on each side of the

"flat," will give stability to the whole back, and prevent swaying when the door is opened or closed.

The illusion of distance through open door or window may be created by hanging cheesecloth about a foot behind the opening and by placing a "flood" light between the cheesecloth and back drop.

Lighting. While the new stagecraft is disposed to eliminate footlights, the amateur had better avail himself of these lights, if his stage is equipped with them. The footlights should consist of amber, blue, and white in equal numbers. White alone creates a glare; amber gives a soft subdued light — although it does not bring out colors in costumes and setting so well as straw; blue gives a cold, cheerless light.

Footlights alone, however, produce grotesque effects, and should be supplemented by border lights and if possible by a spot light from the back of the auditorium. If these are not available, high power lights equipped with tin reflectors may be placed in the side balconies, and directed toward the stage at an angle of forty-five degrees. This "crisscrossing" of lights serves to break up undesirable shadows, and to give to objects on the stage a plastic or three-dimensional appearance.

Other lighting devices that may be utilized in the wings or behind the back drop to give visibility or color to the stage are "bunch lights" and "floods." A "box flood" can be made by placing a number of one-hundred-watt lamps in a box lined with zinc. This light projected through a gelatin screen of the appropriate color may serve to tint stage setting or to give a proper hue to the sky. A purple flood light, placed on the stage floor

between the back curtain and black cheesecloth hung one or two feet behind the opening in the back, will create a very satisfactory illusion of moonlight; an automobile lamp is quite effective in giving the appearance of moonlight streaming in through open door or window.[1]

NOTES ON PLAYS AND AUTHORS

THE DIABOLICAL CIRCLE

Beulah Bomstead is principal of the Cavalier High School, North Dakota, and is regarded as "one of the promising young playwrights of the northwest." She wrote *The Diabolical Circle* in the course in dramatic composition under Professor Franz Rickaby at the University of North Dakota (see page 338). The comedy was awarded the first Arneberg prize for the best play dealing with an American colonial theme, and was produced by the Dakota Playmakers in 1921 as a feature of the annual Arneberg program in celebration of the Pilgrim Tercentenary.

While *The Diabolical Circle* is a comedy of situation, the characters are strongly individualized, and a good deal of real drama is generated by the play of character against character. The actors essaying the various rôles should avail themselves of all the effectiveness of contrast. The pert, vivacious, and frolicsome Betty sparkles more brightly against the solemn, staid, and pious Cotton Mather; and

[1] The foregoing hints in staging and lighting are intended for those who are obliged to work with a minimum of stage equipment. Those who have greater resources at their command will find additional suggestions in the section on *The New Stagecraft*.

Adonijah, the somber Puritan, is an effective foil for the gay, "wickedly appareled" cavalier.

In the production of the play, period furniture is not essential; a few pieces of the straight, massive "mission" type will suffice. These in connection with the costumes and dialogue will prove adequate in producing the proper mood or atmosphere. Plans for the clock may be had by writing to Professor N. B. Knapp, Manual Training Department, University of North Dakota.

Questions

Study the opening situation. Note how it serves to locate the scene, to generate atmosphere, to explain character, to suggest the main action.

Do you notice any similarity between this situation and the Portia-Nerissa scene in the *Merchant of Venice?*

What impression of Betty do you get in the opening dialogue? Is this impression borne out by her subsequent actions?

Is your interest mainly in the characters or in the plot?

What reaction or feeling does each of the characters arouse in you?

What is the most amusing situation in the play?

In what sense may this play be called "historical"?

FIGUREHEADS

Louise Saunders (Perkins) was born in New York City, and is well known there both as an amateur actress of ability and as a distinguished writer. She began her career as a dramatist at the age of eighteen by writing *The Woodland Princess* for the commencement exercises of the

school from which she was graduated. This delightful operetta was produced at the Court Theatre, London, and has remained a favorite for many years with amateur producing groups. In addition to *Magic Lanterns*, a book of one-act plays, Louise Saunders has written a number of short stories and poems for *Scribner's*, *St. Nicholas*, New York *Evening Post*, and other periodicals.

Figureheads is a picturesque and romantic fantasy full of atmosphere and color. Through the fine stuff of fancy, however, run the tough fibers of reality; the glow of sentimentality is subdued by the spirit of gentle irony in which the play is wrought. The play turns about the vivid personality of the young Princess who holds the center of the stage throughout. The playing of the part involves exaggeration, but a certain delicacy as well, for it is poised between romantic comedy and burlesque. The Princess is vain, egotistic, and willful as a spoiled child, and disposed to dramatize herself, but there are also a wistfulness and a freshness about her that engage our sympathy. Her impulsiveness and sentimental capering stand out in contrast with the calmness, poise, and philosophical detachment of the young Prince. The urge and impatience of youth pulsating through the play give it tempo moderate at first, but quickening as the play proceeds.

The setting should be rich and colorful. One or two tapestries on the wall, purple draperies over the furniture, and warm lights will yield the proper atmosphere. The costumes of the musicians should suggest oriental splendor, and the equipments of the guards should have a touch of the barbaric.

Questions

What purpose does the prologue serve?

With reference to the opening of the play, how does the author establish the atmosphere? How does she suggest the character of Felicia?

Are there any situations in the play where the Princess truly expresses herself, or is she always posing?

Which character seems to you more real, the Prince or the Princess? Why?

How do you feel toward Felicia? Do you like her? Do you admire her? Do you sympathize with her?

What is the author's attitude toward Felicia?

What do you consider the most dramatic situation in the play? Why?

Explain the significance of the title.

THE ROMANCERS

Edmond Rostand, equally great as poet, as playwright, and as humorist, stands in the front rank of modern French dramatists. He was born at Marseilles in 1868, educated in Paris, and took a degree in law in 1890. He wrote his first play before he was twenty years old; this was a one-act comedy, *Le gant rouge* (*The Red Glove*), produced in 1888. Two years later he submitted *Les romanesques* to the Comédie-Française, and received a prize of 4000 francs, paid by the French national theatre for the best piece received during the season of 1890–1891. In 1897 he gained world-wide fame by the production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, "the greatest theatrical success of modern times." [1]

[1] Barrett H. Clark, *A Study of the Modern Drama.*

His *L'Aiglon* was produced in 1900 with Bernhardt in the title rôle, and *Chantecler* was played by Maude Adams in 1910. Rostand at the age of thirty-three had the distinction of being the youngest member elected to the French Academy. He died in 1918.

It seems somewhat strange, at first sight, that Rostand, who was hailed as the prophet of a great romantic revival, should have begun his career as dramatist with a burlesque on romance. *The Romancers*, however, is a genial satire merely on false, exaggerated romance with its conventional heroics; and, occasionally, the play gets in a delightfully telling thrust at the literal and material minded as well. "Plays!" shouts Bergamin as he pulls the book from Percinet's pocket, "and in verse! Verse!"

The first act of *The Romancers* is reprinted here as a one-act play. Its unmistakable completeness and finality would indicate that it was originally so conceived. The other acts were probably added as an afterthought.

In the second act, the wall is down, but close proximity causes Bergamin and Pasquinot to become irritated with each other. Vexed further by the silly illusions and patronizing attitude of the young lovers, the fathers finally reveal how they have played on the romantic couple. The lovers are disillusioned, and Percinet leaves Sylvette to seek real romance and adventure.

In the third act the lovers are reunited through the artifices of that captivating and original genius, Straforel, who is still seeking payment of his bill.

The prose translation, or rather adaptation, has caught the sparkle and charm, the sentiment and genial irony of the original, but can merely suggest the lyric beauty

and word magic of Rostand's alexandrines. While the cutting of the longer lyric passages takes something from the poetic flavor of the play, it gives the piece an admirable naturalness and ease.

Questions

In the original version of the play the first act is divided into ten scenes. Can you tell where these divisions occur?

In producing the play would you use modern or period costumes? Why?

In what way does the opening strike the keynote of the play?

Whence do the young lovers derive their romantic fancies?

What is your attitude toward the lovers? Do you sympathize with their youthful idealism, or do you consider their conduct silly?

What do you consider the three most amusing situations in the play?

What character in the play do you consider most interesting? Why?

If you are familiar with *Romeo and Juliet*, explain what use Rostand has made of Shakespeare's plot.

THE KING'S ENGLISH

Herbert Bates, head of the English Department of Manual Training High School, Brooklyn, is a native of Boston and a graduate of Harvard. He was for several years Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, and is the author of a *History of English Literature* and many other educational texts. He was chairman of the

committee which prepared for the National Council of Teachers of English the list of *Books for Home Reading*. Mr. Bates has written some twenty short plays, most of them occasional pieces, especially adapted for school dramatics. Among the plays written by Mr. Bates and successfully produced by amateur groups, are the following:

His Excellency — A play for Christmas dealing with Puritan traditions.

They Shall Not Be Afraid — An incident connected with the landing of the Pilgrims.

Their Flag — The experience of an American crew among South American revolutionists.

Old Zebulon — A satiric comedy dealing with pride of ancestry.

The Garraways — A romantic episode in the life of the fisher folk of New England.

Old Bedlow's Money — A melodrama in which the villain is foiled by a sharp-witted office boy.

That Impossible Mrs. Ormingham — "A social tragedy" in two acts.

In the Midst of Alarms — Christmas in the Carolinas during the Revolution.

The King's English was written for Better English Week, and has been produced in a number of Brooklyn high schools. The play is an ingenious combination of the realistic and imaginative, and is especially effective on the stage. Of the rich assortment of characters in the play, some furnish the charm of novelty and others — the types — evoke the pleasure of recognition. These "keyed up"

and placed in a situation frankly and refreshingly absurd make a colorful picture and rousing comedy. Through the bright and sparkling texture of the play, just as in *Figureheads* and *Sham*, there runs a thread of gentle satire.

The play demands no elaborate scenery, and is extremely easy to stage. The author's directions regarding costumes, setting, and casting (supplemented by the notes given below) are clear and practicable, and in the production of the play have proved adequate and effective.

Notes by the Author

It is better to use home-made tropical scenery than to use ready-made "opera-house" representations of forest scenes of a northern type.

Crowns can readily be obtained at a moderate price from costuming houses. Spears can be made of wood, the blades painted with aluminum paint or with common oil paints to represent iron. The skin round Kawa's shoulders may be rented from a costuming house, or a fur rug may be used.

It is important, in order to produce the effect, not to add farcical business that interferes with the main action. The more seriously the parts are played, the better the comic effect.

(For the parts of Pudkins and Perlheimer may be substituted parts suited to the locality where the play is produced. The substituted parts must be similar in general effect to those they replace.)

Questions

The author calls this play a "phantasy." What does this term mean? In what way is it appropriate?

Has the play an effective opening? In what way is it effective?

Can you distinguish between the exposition and the main action?

Is the exposition interesting? Why?

Does the play develop suspense? Where? What is the climax of the play?

What characters in the play are most familiar to you?

Can you think of some other character type that would fit into the play? Write the dialogue for this character.

What elements in the play are imaginative? What elements are based on observation?

What other plays in this collection combine the realistic with the imaginative or fantastic?

THE LOST SILK HAT

Lord Dunsany (Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett) was born in 1878, and is descended from one of the oldest families in Irish history. Dunsany Castle, where he spent his youth, is within sight of the historic Hill of Tara. He received his education at Eton and Sandhurst and later entered the army, serving with distinction in the South African War and in the World War.

Dunsany's first play, *The Glittering Gate*, was written for the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, where it was put on in 1909. Two years later *King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior* was produced at the same theatre. Dunsany's one-act plays first gained popularity in America through our Little Theatres. The Neighborhood Playhouse in 1915 staged *The Glittering Gate* and, in 1916, *A Night at an Inn* and *The Queen's Enemies* (see page 336). During the

same season three other plays were produced by Stuart Walker in his Folding Theatre — *The Gods of the Mountain, King Argimenes* and *The Golden Doom.* In most of Dunsany's plays, as well as in his inimitable tales (*The Gods of Pegana*, 1905; *Time and the Gods*, 1906; *The Sword of Welleran*, 1908; *A Dreamer's Tales*, 1910; *The Book of Wonder*, 1912), setting, characters, and situation are woven wholly out of the rich stuff of his imagination. To use his own phrase, he "set out to build new worlds for the fancy."

The Lost Silk Hat shows Dunsany's power to invest realistic setting and familiar characters with the strangeness and beauty of romance. This delightful comedy, first produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, in 1913, is based on what is apparently a most trifling incident, and has the slightest of story threads. Note, however, how rapidly it seizes your interest, how easily and naturally one episode glides into another, and how the interest mounts steadily to the final dramatic situation.

Dunsany's treatment of character is also noteworthy. He is interested in human nature rather than in persons. Hence the characters represent broad types rather than individuals. They are, nevertheless, excitingly real. The Laborer, slow of wit but fertile of fancy, scents a plot. The dialogue in which he frankly avows his suspicions furnishes rich comedy. The Clerk is less imaginative but hardly less suspicious; he balks, however, at overstepping the proprieties. Both of these, whose minds run in conventional grooves, accentuate the super-sensitiveness and romantic fervor of the Poet who is further emphasized by contrast with the common-sense Caller. The reaction of

character upon character develops an intensely dramatic situation, and the final ejaculation of the Poet marks the climax and resolution. This is the distinctive Dunsany ending, and has in it something of the precision and finality of an arrow striking its mark.

Questions

Imagine this play to be the second act of a three-act play. Where are the first and last acts laid? Can you picture what occurred in these acts?

What are the outstanding traits of the Poet? Of the Caller? In what way do these two furnish an effective contrast?

Where does the play develop the point of greatest suspense?

Why does the Caller decide to go in for the hat, himself?

Is the return of the Laborer and of the Caller with the Policeman natural? Why?

In what way does their presence add to the effectiveness of the ending?

Which of the following adjectives do you consider most appropriate in describing Dunsany's dialogue: colloquial, simple, obscure, clear, involved, poetic?

THE THRICE-PROMISED BRIDE

Mr. Cheng-Chin Hsiung came to this country from Nan Chang, China, in 1922. After taking the A.M. degree at Cornell, he went to the University of North Carolina for the course in dramatic composition and production under Professor Frederick H. Koch. While at the university he wrote two plays for production by the Carolina Play-

makers: *The Thrice-Promised Bride*, and *The Marvelous Romance of Wen Chun-Chin*.[1] Mr. Hsiung has recently gone back to his native land, where he plans to establish a Chinese folk-theatre.

The Thrice-Promised Bride, according to the author, is based on a folk-tale of old China, told in various versions to Chinese children to teach them the lesson of filial piety, and to impress them with the justice of their superiors. An engagement before either of the children has been born is a form of marriage contract not uncommon in China. The excuse of long separation by war, flood, or examination is a device in the plot of many a Chinese drama. He has drawn the characters from his own experience. Those of the magistrate and the mother are in ironical contrast—what seems at the first benignant in the mother is really cruel, and what seems cruel in the magistrate is benignant in the end.

The author illumines this colorful bit of Chinese folk-drama for our western understanding by many vivid and delightful touches, in the form of stage directions, comment on character, and exposition of Chinese dramatic conventions. These playful and sophisticated overtones show the author to be thoroughly imbued with the modern spirit and emphasize, by contrast, the simplicity and freshness of the play itself.

"Mr. Hsiung has a charming sense of humor," says Professor Koch, "and writes with a naïveté of imagination and freshness of phrase which our young American playwrights may well emulate. We predict that he will play an important part in the making of a new Chinese drama."

[1] Published in *Poet Lore*, summer number, 1924.

Questions

Are you familiar with any other Chinese play? Can you tell anything about the functions of the Property Man mentioned in the stage directions?

What theatrical devices and stage conventions do you find in this play that seem peculiar to the Chinese stage?

What is your attitude toward the frank spirit of "make believe"? Do you feel that it adds to or takes from the enjoyment of the play?

Can you imagine in what way our reactions to a play of this kind might differ from the reactions of a Chinese audience?

What character seems to you most real?

Who, according to Chinese dramatic convention, is the most important character in the play?

Comment on the bearing of the heroine.

THE BOOR

Anton Pavlovitch Chekhov was born at Tagaurog, Russia, in 1860. In 1879 he entered upon the study of medicine at Moscow University and about the same time began his literary career by contributing stories to weekly journals. In Moscow he became acquainted with Korsh, the "Russian Antoine" who in the 80's established the first Little Theatre in Russia. Chekhov's early one-act plays, *The Boor*, *The Proposal*, *The Swan Song*, and his first long comedy, *Ivanoff*, were produced at Korsh's theatre. From 1898 to his death six years later, Chekhov was associated with the Moscow Art Theatre, which popularized his *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*,

and *The Cherry Orchard*. These plays in turn established the reputation of the Moscow Theatre.

The Boor is one of Chekhov's best one-act plays. He called it his "mascot" because it was played "an uncounted number of times all over Russia and was for a long time his main support."[1] It is not only a rollicking comedy but a particularly well-constructed play. This is the more remarkable as Chekhov in his longer plays deliberately disregards technical structure. He is preoccupied with humanity, not with plot, and usually reflects the somber and tedious life of the men and women in the provincial towns. In *The Boor*, however, he yields to a lighter mood. But even through the spirit of farce in which the play is conceived he projects those traits of Russian character which he knows so well, — its naïveté, its innate good nature, and its robustness.

The widow's extravagant protests of fidelity, pierced now and then by recollections of unworthiness in the object, are delightfully humorous and realistic. The sudden but carefully prepared climax has something of the precision and finality of a Dunsany ending. Luka's ejaculation, "Merciful heavens!" which punctuates the climax is a fine stroke. It comes as a sort of chorus voicing the combined amazement of the armed crew who have come to the rescue of their mistress.

Questions

What is there in the play to suggest that the characters are Russian?

With reference to a production of the play, what can you

[1] Leo Wiener, *Contemporary Drama of Russia*, page 97.

suggest by way of setting, costumes, and properties that would add atmosphere or local color?

Could this play begin with the main action, omitting the exposition?

In what way does the exposition make the main action more effective?

Does the author succeed in making the climax plausible? How?

Compare the ending of this play with that of Dunsany's *The Lost Silk Hat.* Can you discover any points of similarity?

What outstanding traits of Russian character are brought out in this play?

THE WORKHOUSE WARD

Lady Augusta Gregory was born at Roxborough, County Galway, Ireland, in 1859. Bernard Shaw has spoken of her as "the greatest living Irishwoman." This praise is by no means extravagant, for in the wealth and variety of her contributions to the Irish dramatic movement and to Anglo-Irish literature she has not been surpassed by any of her contemporaries. Lady Gregory is an outstanding figure in the Irish literary revival. In this connection, she and Yeats were the most active in the project of an Irish National Theatre, and it was mainly through their efforts that the Abbey Theatre was founded in 1904 (a development of the Irish Literary Theatre). In 1911 Lady Gregory accompanied the Irish Players on their visit to the United States — a visit which undoubtedly gave the first impulse to the founding of Little Theatres in this country.

Distinguished as Lady Gregory is, as a writer, lecturer, translator, and director, her chief fame rests on her folk-comedies. As a gatherer of Irish folklore and discoverer of the colorful Kiltartan dialect which she has utilized in her dramatic work, Lady Gregory has given Ireland "a sort of second birth." In a discussion of her dramatic work, Barrett H. Clark says, "Lady Gregory's genius is for comedy; the best of her little folk-plays are among the few genuine comedies of modern time." [1] These plays, among which *Spreading the News*, *Hyacinth Halvey*, and *The Workhouse Ward* are the most popular, achieve distinction not through ingenuity of plot or skillful *dénouement*, but through an insight into the vagaries of human nature and through a delightful rendering of the color, the humor, the quaint turn, the "exquisite illogic" of Irish common speech.

The Workhouse Ward was first produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1908. The play, strictly speaking, has no plot, — it ends where it begins. It presents one of those problems in life that have no solution. The two old paupers will go on abusing each other as long as both remain alive. The reaction of character upon character, however, is full of rich comedy that arouses both our sympathy and laughter; for the cantankerousness here depicted is, we feel, part of our common human nature.

Lady Gregory explains the origin of the play as follows:

"I heard of an old man in the workhouse who had been disabled many years before by, I think, a knife thrown at him by his wife in some passionate quarrel.

[1] *A Study of the Modern Drama.*

"One day I heard the wife had been brought in there, poor and sick. I wondered how they would meet, and if the old quarrel was still alive, or if they who knew the worst of each other would be better pleased with each other's company than with that of strangers.

"I wrote a scenario of the play for Dr. Douglas Hyde, I giving in plot what he gave back in dialogue, for at that time we thought a dramatic movement in Irish would be helpful to our own as well as to the Gaelic League. Later I tried to rearrange it for our own theatre, and for three players only, but in doing this I found it necessary to write entirely new dialogue, the two old men in the original play obviously talking at an audience in the wards, which is no longer there.

"I sometimes think the scolding paupers are a symbol of ourselves in Ireland — Is feárr imirt na uaigneas — 'it is better to be quarreling than to be lonesome.' The Rajputs, that great fighting race, when they were told they had been brought under the Pax Britannica and must give up war, gave themselves to opium in its place, but Connacht has not yet planted its poppy gardens."

Questions

Into how many situations or episodes may the play be divided?

What is the purpose of the first situation?

What situation is the most dramatic? Why?

Which is the most amusing? Why?

Are the characters of Mike and Michael sharply differentiated? Is there any attempt by the author to "star" one of these?

Which of the two paupers is the more aggressive? Can you show this by references to the play?

Do the antics of Mike and Michael arouse in you any feeling other than amusement? Explain your feeling towards them.

Has the play solved any problem, answered any question? Explain your answer.

Do you know the distinction between comedy and farce? How would you classify this play? Why?

THE UNSEEN

Alice Gerstenberg was born in Chicago, and received her education at Bryn Mawr College. She gained recognition in 1915 by her dramatic rendering of *Alice in Wonderland*, which was produced at the Fine Arts Theatre, Chicago, and at the Booth Theatre, New York. She is author of two novels, *Unquenched Fire* and *The Conscience of Sara Platt*, and of several volumes of one-act plays, but is perhaps best known for *Overtones*, called by its admirers, "the most famous American short play." Miss Gerstenberg's plays, delightfully amusing as farce comedy or convincing as drama, frequently have an underlying basis of sound philosophy that make them significant as well.

The Unseen is a domestic comedy in which the stupid maid is the complicating factor; she is, however, something more. By her blundering she thwarts desires leading to destruction, and thus becomes an instrument of salvation. The fact that she is throughout the play utterly unconscious of the rôle she is playing, adds to the effectiveness of the situation. She is puzzled by what appear to her strange, senseless, and confusing directions

regarding her domestic duties and service as waitress. She is still more puzzled by her summary dismissal. When the tide of wrath that so suddenly rises and is about to carry her out as suddenly turns and swings her back, she is left mentally gasping. Her utter bewilderment amidst the joyful cordiality of her master and mistress furnishes an effective tableau before the final curtain.

Questions

How does this play differ in structure from the other plays in the volume?

How does the author suggest the lapse of time, in the second part of the play?

In the episode of the belated telegram, what is your attitude toward Hulda? Are you provoked at her, or do you feel sorry for her?

How does the climax of this episode heighten the dramatic effect of the final climax?

How would you characterize the ending? Is it the conventional happy ending? The surprise ending? The inevitable ending? Explain your answer.

Does the play foreshadow the ending? How?

What connection is there between the title and the play?

State concisely the theme of the play.

SHAM

Frank G. Tompkins was born in Litchfield, Michigan, in 1879. After graduating from the University of Michigan, he became a teacher of English. Later, he was appointed Head of the Department of English in the Detroit Junior

College. In addition to *Sham*, Professor Tompkins has published three one-act plays: *Philanthropy* in Pierre Loving's *Ten Minute Plays*, *In Front of Potter's* in Frank Shay's *A Treasury of Plays for Men*, and *The Letters* published by Appleton.

Sham was originally produced by Sam Hume in 1916 as the dedicatory piece of the New Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit. It is not only a delightful social satire, but a remarkably well-constructed one-act play noteworthy for directness, clarity, and concentration. The effective bit of pantomime in the opening engages the attention at once and projects the interest forward. While the play has not, comparatively speaking, a great deal of physical action, it nevertheless affords the players splendid opportunities, especially if they are well cast for the parts. Clara is the nervously aggressive type, wholly artificial, yet clever in her way, and not incapable of charm. Charles is big, well fed, genial, and slow, but genuine — "the only genuine article in the house." The esthetic thief is an altogether engaging and original person. The play of character on character gives rise to the novel and amusing situation, and brings into clear relief the theme, inherent in the character of Clara.

Questions

What is the first dramatic episode in the play?

In what way is the abrupt opening of this play effective?

What is the turning point in the play? What change does it bring about in the situation?

By what means does the author reveal and accentuate the character of Clara?

Is the type which she represents a common one? In what respect?

What is gained by the introduction of the reporter?

Comment on the episode dealing with the substitution of the pictures. Has it any character interest? What is its dramatic value?

In what sense is this play a social satire?

CONFESSIONAL

Percival Wilde was born in New York City in 1887. After graduation from Columbia at the age of nineteen, he was connected for five years with the banking business. He began writing as a book reviewer for the New York *Times* and the New York *Post*. Upon publication of his first story, he received many requests for dramatic rights, and turned his attention to play writing. During the world war he served as Ensign in the United States Navy. In *The Unseen Host and Other War Plays*, he has given us several of the best one-act plays dealing with the world war. In addition to five books of short plays and four full-length plays, he has written *The Craftsmanship of the One-Act Play*, an authoritative and standard treatise on the subject. Percival Wilde has the distinction of having had more plays produced in American Little Theatres than any other American author.

Confessional is an interesting example of certain theories held by the author with reference to portrayal of character in the one-act play. "An apparently good man may become bad," says Mr. Wilde, "or an apparently bad man, good, all within the limits of a one-act play. But if that is to happen, it is more than probable that his character

in the beginning contained hidden within it the elements which triumph in the end." [1]

Baldwin, in the beginning of the play, is presented as a man who has achieved a reputation for absolute integrity; and the members of Baldwin's family also seem honorable. They express deep indignation at the idea of a bribe. Yet at the very outset we feel a certain doubt regarding the soundness of the Baldwins' moral fiber. This feeling is due principally to their frequent and over-emphatic protestations of honesty. The first definite and significant revelation appears when the exact amount of the bribe is named. The mention of the huge sum staggers the family and suddenly cools their indignation. The flash of resentment shown by Baldwin arises not from the feeling that his family is counseling a dishonest act, but from the realization that they have penetrated the quality of his scruples. The culmination of Baldwin's moral failure is given an ironic twist in the final climax. The Baldwins, having revealed to one another their poverty of soul in reaching out for the dishonest reward, are suddenly made to realize that both the opportunity and motive for grasping the prize have been removed, and removed through Baldwin's reputation for integrity.

Questions

Why did Baldwin refuse the bribe when it was offered to him?

Why did he finally yield? Whom do you blame more for his moral surrender, Baldwin himself or his family?

Do you think it plausible that a man of Baldwin's weak

[1] *The Craftsmanship of the One-Act Play*, page 284.

moral fiber could have achieved a reputation for absolute integrity?

What is the nature of Baldwin's emotion at the end of the play? regret? shame? disappointment? joy?

Imagine a short scene in the Baldwin household immediately following Marshall's departure. Write the dialogue for this scene.

Compare this play with *Dust of the Road*, with reference to theme, treatment, and ending.

Compare Baldwin with Steele. Imagine how each of these would have acted in the other's place.

Explain the title of the play.

DUST OF THE ROAD

Kenneth Sawyer Goodman was born in 1883 and died in 1918 while serving as lieutenant in the navy. While a student in Princeton he made extended experiments in verse, and won the poetry prize in 1904. Later he became interested in the theatre, and gave himself to the study of all aspects of the drama — play writing, acting, stage decoration, and production. In 1911 he became a Governing Life Member of the Art Institute of Chicago, and this institute recently dedicated in his honor the Goodman Memorial Theatre. His one-act plays, now published by the Stage Guild in two volumes, *Quick Curtains* and *More Quick Curtains*, give a vivid impression of character in action. *The Wonder Hat*, written in collaboration with Ben Hecht, is a delightful harlequinade; and *Masques of East and West*, written in collaboration with Thomas Wood Stevens, is rich in romantic fancy.

Dust of the Road was first produced by the Wisconsin

Dramatic Society in 1913, with Thomas Wood Stevens in the rôle of the Tramp. This play is a modern Morality similar in theme to Charles Rann Kennedy's *The Servant in the House* and Jerome K. Jerome's *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*. All of these plays were written under the influence of the fifteenth-century Morality, *Everyman*, which was revived in 1901. While the earlier and modern Moralities are similar in ethical purpose, they differ in method of presentation. The former presents life in the guise of an allegory with abstract virtues and vices for characters. The latter makes the allegory unobtrusive and the characters real and concrete. In *Dust of the Road* the author has given an original turn to the presentation of the traditional theme. In *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* and in *The Servant in the House*, the central and symbolic character is an embodiment of the Divine who brings to those about him a vision of a nobler life. In *Dust of the Road*, it is Steele's sin — projected by conscience — in the form of the Tramp, that confronts him and leads him to the rescue of his better nature, — the Divine essence that the Steeles have violated and cast out. The ending — Steele's delight in the glory of the dawn as he steps out to bring back the bandaged stranger — is noteworthy. Not only is it dramatically effective, but it illumines the theme and brings into clear relief the symbolism of the play.

Questions

Where does the author impart the necessary information relating to events preceding the play?

Has he aroused your curiosity regarding these events? How?

Why is this method of explaining preceding events dramatically effective?

Can you find any suggestions in the play that conscience in the Steeles was still alive before the entrance of the Tramp?

What symbolic elements do you find in the play?

What does the bandaged stranger symbolize?

Do you think the allusion to him more artistic than his actual appearance? Why?

What purpose in the play does the Uncle serve?

Select from the play several passages that seem to you noteworthy for poetic phrasing or beauty of imagery.

What other play in this collection would you select for the purpose of comparison?

ILE

Eugene G. O'Neill was born in 1888, in New York City, the son of James O'Neill of *Monte Cristo* fame. The urge to write — according to his own statement — came to him while he was in a sanatorium recovering from an affection of the lungs. He was then about twenty-four years of age, but already he had behind him a life crowded with rich and varied experiences. His first adventure (1909) was a gold prospecting trip to Spanish Honduras — where he fell ill of fever. On his return, he became assistant manager of a traveling theatrical company. Then came "the call of the sea," and he shipped on a Norwegian bark to Buenos Ayres. After trying his hand at various occupations in Argentina, he made a voyage on a cattle steamer — tending mules — to South Africa and back. A period of complete destitution in Buenos Ayres

forced him to sign as ordinary seaman on a British tramp steamer for New York. When he left the sea he had attained the status of able seaman on the American Line.

After his period of world wandering, O'Neill became a member of his father's company, and later worked as a reporter. Failing health, however, brought about the "enforced period of reflection" (at the sanatorium) which turned his mind toward play writing. In 1914 O'Neill published his first volume of short plays, *Thirst and Other Plays* — at his own expense. In the same year he became a student in Professor Baker's English 47, at Harvard. In the summer of 1916 O'Neill joined the newly organized group of Provincetown Players (see page 335), who have made the original productions of nearly all of his short plays. No less than sixteen one-act plays preceded the writing of his first long play, *Beyond the Horizon*. "The awarding of the Pulitzer Prize to *Beyond the Horizon* in June, 1920," says Thomas H. Dickinson, "sealed in popular estimation the judgment of the few enthusiasts who had felt since 1916 that a new force had arrived in the American Theatre."

Ile, like several other of O'Neill's plays, is the study of a man with an obsession. (The sea, it seems, sometimes does queer things to the souls of men who go down to it in ships.) The tense situation developed in the play, a culmination of a long struggle of wills, arises from a single dominating motive in the chief character. Captain Keeney, like Captain Bartlett in *Where the Cross Is Made*,[1] is a strong man with one idea. Were Captain Keeney

[1] A one-act play expanded by O'Neill into the three-act play, *Gold*.

merely a bully, the story would be pitiful or sordid but scarcely tragic. But Keeney is not inherently mean or ruthless. We are moved quite as much by what his obsession does to the captain himself as by what it does to his victim. In the struggle he is obliged to subdue not only the wills opposed to his, but something within himself as well. To the mutinous crew he shows an iron spirit. But while he remains inflexible in the face of physical opposition, he seems after the long struggle unable to withstand the pleas of his wife. His softer feelings are winning, when the sudden breaking up of the ice and the blowing of the whales call for an immediate decision. The strain proves too great. After a tense moment he yields, and at the same time his wife's tottering reason gives way.

Questions

"In the O'Neill theatre," says Professor Dickinson, "character is like the strings of a violin which do not give forth music until they are placed under strain. And not infrequently the pressure is made so great that the chord breaks. . . . It is only when we are under strain that we are truly ourselves. When the string hangs too loose, custom and habit rule."

Apply the foregoing statement to *Ile;* to other dramas that you have read or studied.

Do you agree with the latter part of Professor Dickinson's statement?

This play marks the culmination of a long struggle of wills. How long has this struggle been going on? Does the author give you the effect of a long struggle? How?

Can you explain the nature of Captain Keeney's obsession?

Does the captain himself give you any clews to the nature of the impulse that drives him on?

Can you sympathize with the captain?

How does the author, in the course of the play, prepare you for Mrs. Keeney's final mental collapse?

Do you think Captain Keeney would have yielded to his wife's pleas and turned back if the ice had not broken up?

Is the tragedy due entirely to a dominating quality in character, or is it due in part to circumstances? Explain your answer.

What is the author's attitude toward his characters? Is his attitude detached or sympathetic? Does he take sides, or is he fair to all his characters?

THE GOD OF QUIET

John Drinkwater, poet, dramatist, and critic, was born at Oxford in 1882. He is descended from a long line of tillers of the Oxfordshire soil, but his father was connected with the stage as actor, theatrical manager, and first secretary of the Stage Society. After leaving the Oxford High School he worked for twelve years as a life insurance clerk; during these years, however, the future poet and dramatist "devoured English literature with the hunger of a lost wanderer from paradise." As a result of his interest in the drama and inherited affinity for the theatre, he became one of the founders of the Pilgrim Players. This organization developed into the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, where Drinkwater first produced his *Mary Stuart*, *Abraham Lincoln*, and his short poetic dramas.

Drinkwater is one of our modern men of vision who take their art seriously. "It is we artists," he says, "who are the strictly practical people, we who have our eyes set straight and not squinty, and we can see beyond our noses." Drinkwater in his art, therefore, strives not only to translate life into beauty, but to form a more sensitive social conscience.

The God of Quiet is one of the short poetic dramas that express emotions of the author arising from the world war, and was first produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 1916. The play suggests the vision of beauty and peace assailed by the "practical men" of the world and the Captains of War.

Says the Young Beggar:

> " And I tell you he should be hurrying now,
> Ransacking the world, not a mere consent,
> A space unpeopled, a rusty plough . . .
> Life is a matter of shouting and haste."

And the Second King speaks with enthusiasm of the

> " Great life that urges, bidding us defy
> All who would stand against us, and spare
> Nothing of pain and sacrifice, but dare
> Very calamity to let our name
> Thrive in the lists of honor."

The dagger struck by the king to the heart of the God of Quiet has been interpreted as being "symbolic of the stroke dealt to the yet more noble figure of the Prince of Peace."

The allegory, however, need not be pushed too far. Apart from the ethical note which lends dignity and sig-

nificance, the piece claims distinction primarily as drama expressed in poetry. One quality of the poetry which deserves attention is its fine adaptation to character and mood. Note the bristling staccato of the opening speech by the Young Beggar:

> " Nor coin nor crust,
> Three leagues of dust
> We've trodden. Blast
> Them — let them fast
> And try the flavor —"

Compare this with the haunting melody of another speech — the one in which the Old Beggar pictures his vision:

> " One day I stood
> At dusk in the golden harvest lands,
> And watched the sickles rise and fall,
> And the following women with potent hands
> Gleaning all, gleaning all,
> And the pigeons slept in the pines, and the sound
> Of leaves and water grew strong and clear,
> And trouble had died and I had found
> Peace, O Lord, as here."

The foregoing aptly illustrates Drinkwater's theory of poetry, the main function of which, he says, is to translate common, simple life into "the most exact and stirring beauty."

Questions

What characters come under the sway of the God of Quiet?

What power or influence does each of these characters attribute to the God of Quiet?

Upon what characters does this influence seem most pronounced?

Why does the First King stay his advance upon the city?

What quarrel has the Second King with the God of Quiet?

Comment on the ending of the play. Is the First King's attempt to avenge the God of Quiet consistent?

What elements contribute to the atmosphere of the play?

What impression does the play give you of the author and of his attitude toward life?

Select passages from the play that seem to you noteworthy for (*a*) nobility of thought, (*b*) beauty of imagery, (*c*) melody.

THE WHITE HAWK

Harry Kemp was born in Youngstown, Ohio, in 1883, and received his education in the University of Kansas. In addition to *Judas*, a four-act play, and several volumes of poetry, he has written more than thirty one-act plays. The first of these were produced by the Provincetown Players with whom Mr. Kemp was associated in the beginning of their enterprise (see page 334). Later he opened a unique little theatre of his own, where he staged his plays in accordance with certain original and interesting ideas. He gives a vivid account of his theatrical ventures in the introduction to his volume of plays. Mr. Kemp is one of the few contemporary playwrights who prefer the byways of poetry and romance to the paths of realism. He explains his predilection for the poetic drama in the following words:

"In using blank verse and rhyme, might I not thereby avoid the present dialect that dies, and attain a sort of exalted, universal language that does not pass, but touches with sure contact on human passions and emotions universal to every age and period? . . .

"To place the action of my plays in the colored historic Past might afford liberating values that more than compensated for any lack of local color. It might make, symbolically, the period, all time; the place, the world." [1]

The story in Boccaccio's *Decameron* which forms the basis for Mr. Kemp's poetic drama has been a favorite with story-tellers, poets, and dramatists from the earliest times. The tale, probably of eastern origin, is found in a collection of Sanskrit fables. A brief Latin version appears in *Gesta Romanorum*. In the French, it is found among the *Contes et nouvelles* of La Fontaine. Most English students are familiar with the story, through Longfellow's *Falcon of Ser Federigo* and Tennyson's *The Falcon*.

A comparison of *The White Hawk* and *The Falcon* will prove an interesting project, and will serve, incidentally, to bring out the specialized technique of the modern one-act play. The student who wishes to make such a comparison may find help in the following questions.

Questions

With reference to the opening of each play, observe how each author contrives to unfold the events that preceded the rise of the curtain. Which opening is the more direct, more like part of the main action? Which opening seizes interest more quickly? Explain why.

[1] Introduction to *Boccaccio's Untold Tale and Other Plays.*

Observe the leisurely and deliberate movement of Tennyson's play, also the numerous episodes and details brought into the main action. Do any of these seem superfluous?

In *The Falcon* Mona Giovana, on her first appearance at Sir Federigo's, explains in a long monologue her reasons for coming. Note how, in *The White Hawk*, this expository matter is woven into the main action. Which method do you consider more effective dramatically? Why?

Contrast the slow tempo and low emotional pitch of *The Falcon* with the simple, rapid, and intense action in *The White Hawk*. Which treatment seems to you the more appropriate? the more plausible? Why? Which is the more dramatic? Why?

Which dramatist achieves a more effective climax? How?

Does Mr. Kemp's hero or heroine react, in the crucial moments, exactly like Tennyson's? Is Mr. Kemp's conception of the characters different from Tennyson's, or has he merely keyed them up higher emotionally?

An "interest diagram" of each play will prove helpful in the comparison of the two dramas. Suggestions for such diagrams may be found in Brander Matthews' *Study of the Drama*, chapter x.

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